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IN TRIBULATION

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The Blessing of Trials

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Foreword

Only He who made our hearts fully understands them; and no one but the Son of man who is the Son of God can be touched with the feeling of all our infirmities, having been in all points tried as we have been tried. But whoever has had any experience of trials, suffering, sorrow, bereavement, and has been divinely helped to profit by that experience, can hope to be of service in words of sympathy to those similarly tried and troubled. It is the heart which bleeds with its own sorrows which can go out in living sympathy toward another bleeding heart; and it is the hearts that have gained comfort from the God of all comfort that can speak comforting words to others who are in any affliction, out of the comfort wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God.

Foreword

The following pages were mainly written while their writer was being tested in the fierce flames of a furnace of trial, and while cheered by the ever-blessed companionship and comforting presence of the Son of God. It is hoped, by him who was thus tried and thus sustained, that his words out of the heart may come home to other hearts in similar need.

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I

Mission of Tribulation

We connect with the term "tribulation" the severest kind of distress, of suffering, of affliction. Yet the word "tribulation" is chiefly used in the Bible as expressive of a divinely sent, or a divinely permitted, state of trial, which may tend to the spiritual welfare of those who endure it patiently, or who improve it wisely. It behooves us, therefore, to consider carefully the nature and mission of tribulation, in order that we may know when we are in tribulation, and why; what tribulation is, and what is its mission.

Tribulation, as the term is employed in the Bible, means distress, or affliction, or trial, especially as growing out of straitness or pressure which hinders progress as one is, and makes it necessary for one to give up much that one would like to carry

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on without yielding. The root idea of the Hebrew word in the Old Testament which is translated "tribulation," and it is much the same with the correspondent Greek word in the New Testament, is that of squeezing or pressing, as between the walls of a rough and jagged rocky pass. It seems to be like an enemy opposing one's movements and seeking one's destruction. Yet the call is constantly made, in the Bible, on believers, to persevere through this straitened passage, and to endure this unpleasant pressure, in the hope of gain from it by God's blessing.

Jesus declares to his followers as he foretells their future: "In the world ye have tribulation [or severe pressure]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The assurance to believers, after his resurrection and ascension, was, "that through many tribulations [or distresses] we must enter into the kingdom of God." The apostolic injunction is: "Let us also rejoice in our tribulations [or afflictions]:

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knowing that tribulation [or straitness] worketh patience; and patience, probation; and probation, hope: and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us." The idea in these uses of the word translated "tribulation" evidently is that of a God-permitted pressure, that may, by his blessing, work for good. This is the Bible idea; now how is that indicated, or expressed, in the English word "tribulation"?

As to the history and significance of this word, Archbishop Trench says forcefully: "We all know in a general way that this word, which occurs not seldom in Scripture and in the [Church of England] Liturgy, means affliction, sorrow, anguish; but it is quite worth our while to know *how* it means this, and to question 'tribulation' a little closer. It is derived from the Latin 'tribulum,' which was the threshing instrument or harrow whereby the Roman

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husbandman separated the corn from the husks, and 'tribulatio' in its primary significance of the act was this separation."

"So far as to the primitive figure of speech. But some Latin writer of the Christian Church appropriated the word and image for the setting forth of a higher truth; and sorrow, distress, and adversity being the appointed means for the separating in men of whatever in them was light, trivial, and poor, from the solid and the true, their chaff from their wheat, he therefore called these sorrows and trials 'tribulations,'—threshings, that is, of the inner spiritual man, without which there could be no fitting him for the heavenly garner." It is also said, as to this signification: "This deeper religious use of the word 'tribulation' was unknown to classical antiquity, belonging exclusively to the Christian writers."

Trench quotes, in illustration of this truth, the following lines by "George Wither, a

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prolific versifier, and occasionally a poet, of the seventeenth century."

" Till from the straw the flail the corn doth beat,
Until the chaff be purgèd from the wheat,
Yea, till the mill the grains in pieces tear,
The richness of the flour will scarce appear.
So, till men's persons great afflictions touch,
If worth be found, their worth is not so much,
Because, like wheat in straw, they have not yet
That value which in threshing they may get.
For till the bruising flails of God's corrections
Have threshèd out of us our vain affections ;
Till those corrections which do misbecome us
Are by thy sacred Spirit winnowed from us ;
Until from us the straw of worldly treasures,
Till all the dusty chaff of empty pleasures,
Yea, till his flail upon us he doth lay,
To thresh the husk of this our flesh away ;
And leave the soul uncovered ; nay, yet more,
Till God shall make our very spirit poor,
We shall not up to highest wealth aspire ;
But then we shall ; and that is my desire."

The idea of tribulation, therefore, is that of separation for purposes of cleansing, of purifying, of refining. In this sense it includes, not merely threshing, but winnowing, separating the grain from the husk

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on the stalk, and again the grain from the chaff of the husk. It includes also the idea of refining by fire, separating the pure metal from the worthless dross ; of purifying by water, washing away the sand and loam from the atoms and nuggets of gold ; of pressing out the blood of the grape in the wine-press, and the rich oil from the olive in the oil-press. It includes also the process of the parent's or the teacher's rod in chastisement, for purposes of training,—as, indeed, is indicated in the term “ thrashing,” or “ threshing,” in the home or the school-room, as a means of discipline ; thrashing the bad out of the boy in order to leave the good by itself.

In this view of tribulation it is that we are to rejoice in every process of purifying and separation, by which we are to become spiritually refined and uplifted. It was in this aspect of the mission of the Messiah that John the Baptist proclaimed : “ He shall baptize you with [or in] the Holy Spirit and with [or in] fire : whose fan is

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in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor ; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

" Thou Searcher of all hearts, look down and see,
Not if the chaff doth most abound in me,
But if there be a tithe of grace for thee.

" My lying down, my path, my ways, how poor ;
My wasted moments' husks bestrew my floor,
Yet still thou searchest by the garner door.

" Content to stoop, if so upon the ground
One grain of trust, one ear of love, be found ;
So doth thy patience, dearest Lord, abound."

Tribulation is our normal condition in our present state. Our Saviour promises it to us, while we are in the world ; and that promise no follower of his will ever say Jesus has failed to make good. We are all to be under pressure from the flail and the fan and the fire and the press, from the plow and the harrow and the sickle. If we are without tribulation, there is to us no harvest and no garner. We might as well have never lived as to be without the

In Tribulation

process that separates the good from the bad, the precious from the worthless. God be praised for tribulation and its results !

“Blest be thy dew, and blest thy frost,
And happy I to be so crost,
And cured by crosses at thy cost.”

“The dew doth cheer what is distrest ;
The frosts ill weeds nip and molest ;
In both thou work'st unto the best.”

Nothing that is good shall be harmed in a child of God by the destructive forces of tribulation, whether in the fire, the flood, the gale, or under the flail or the press; but when the refuse has been destroyed, that which is precious shall stand out cleansed and refined in permanent and eternal purity. If we would be at our best for now and forevermore, we must “abhor that which is evil,” we must “cleave to that which is good,” being “patient in tribulation,” while “rejoicing in hope.”

When John, in Patmos, had a vision of that which is to come to pass before the final dissolution of the present heavens and

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the present earth, he saw the angels, and the elders, and the living creatures, all on their faces before the throne, worshipping God. And one of the elders asked him concerning an object of special interest in the great multitude there gathered, whom none could number: "These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?" John's reverent answer was: "My lord, thou knowest."

Then came the explanation of the wondrous sight: "These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto foun-

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tains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

If we would be in that heavenly throng, we must have been in, and must have come out of, great tribulation. It is a mission of tribulation to fit us for that fellowship of the redeemed, and for that loving ministry of God in his eternal presence. In view of this truth, shall we welcome, or shall we shrink from, tribulation as it comes to us, or as we come to it, in the providence of God?

II

Tried by Troubles

There are few words of common use that are less understood in their scope and force than the word "trouble." The Bible tells us that "man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble;" and that "man is born unto trouble, as [surely as] the sparks fly upward." In our ordinary speech we refer to our troubles, and to the troubles of others, with the widest and most varying range of meanings.

Sometimes we speak of being troubled with indigestion or rheumatism; again of being troubled by poor servants, or by house-cleaning and by painters and by dressmakers; again, of our children's troubles with their playmates or their studies; of a good woman's trouble with her intemperate husband; of labor troubles, and financial troubles, and political troubles,

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in the community at large. Yet again we say, in a general way, that a certain man has a great deal of trouble, or that a certain other man seems remarkably free from trouble—perhaps that “*he* never knew what trouble was.” What is included in this term “trouble,” that makes it applicable to all these different spheres of personal or social experience?

In the Bible more than twenty different Hebrew words, and a dozen Greek ones, are all rendered by the word “trouble” in our ordinary English version. These words include the idea of labor, pressure, agitation, weariness, fear, sorrow, wickedness, and various kindred emotions and experiences. The root idea of the English word which comprehends them all is: a whirling disturbance; that state of being which makes one whirl round and round instead of standing quietly, or of going straight ahead. *That* is trouble: to be in such a whirl that you can neither rest composedly nor move forward un-

Tried by Troubles

waveringly. Trouble, then, is an effect, and not a cause; it is the inside result rather than the outside pressure; it is a condition of being, instead of the fact of any particular incidents of life.

Trouble is different from tribulation, while it is often associated with it. Tribulation is not in itself trouble. Trouble does not necessarily come with tribulation. One man is troubled without being in tribulation; another man is in tribulation, without being troubled. More than sixty times in the Old Testament the same Hebrew word is interchangeably translated "trouble" and "tribulation." The same process that lacerates and presses may result in the separation of the precious from the worthless, or it may simply cause a mental disturbance and an unsteadiness of being. Just here is where the nature of trouble is liable to be lost sight of; and because of its misconception those about us are misjudged as to the extent and severity of their experiences of trouble.

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We say, sometimes, that children know nothing of real trouble. There could hardly be a greater mistake than this. No troubles are more real than children's troubles—whatever be their cause. Children's hearts ache, and children's hearts sometimes break, with their varied troubles. Many a little child has deliberately put an end to his despairing life, because of trouble that was terribly real to him, however trifling its occasion may have seemed to others.

We may sneer at a loss which troubles a child, as perhaps only "a broken toy;" but that toy, with its associations, and with the investiture of his imaginings, may have been a very dear and sacred thing to the child. Can we even say that our standard of values is always superior to the child's? Do we now put no false estimates on toys? We might call a loss which wellnigh broke *our* hearts "a shattered idol," instead of "a broken toy;" but the consequent trouble would be no

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greater, nor would it be any more real, to us, in the one case, than to the child in the other.

After all, it is the childish troubles which are severest to most of us—especially to those who are most sensitive, and hence are capable of keenest suffering. What is it which just now troubles you above all things else? Is it that which the world would say was worthiest of your first thought, and ought to occasion you most anxiety?

And what was it that made you so unhappy, so unfitted you for the practical duties of life, a year ago, and again only last month? Does it seem to you now quite as important as it then appeared? Can you even remember exactly what it was? Whether you can or not, and whatever you think of the reasonableness of it as a cause of trouble to you, you cannot question that your trouble over it was very real at the time—as real as any trouble you ever had, or ever could have. Trouble

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is none the less real for being childish and unreasonable.

Not what comes to us, but the light in which we look at it, settles the question whether we have trouble over it or not. The coarser-grained man shrugs his shoulders, when he is sharply rebuked by a companion, and says laughingly, "High words break no bones." He is not troubled by anything of that sort. The man of finer grain reads in the countenance of a friend whom he loves and honors a censure of some careless word of his, and his heart is pierced with pain. To him

"A clouded face
Strikes harder than an angry blow."

And he has trouble day and night until that face is bright again. One man loses a few hundred dollars, and it troubles him sorely. Another finds all the slow accumulations of years swept away in an hour, and it brings him no serious sense of loss; yet he is in constant trouble because of his loved son's misdoing. Is it for either

Tried by Troubles

of those men to measure the force of the other's trouble?

What folly for one of us to say, "That man has no trouble to be compared with mine, because he has no experience that duplicates mine"! What if he is free from such physical pain as racks your frame? Are you sure that he would not rather be in physical pain until the day of his death, than endure the trial of his remorseful memories? What if he seems supplied with all these sources of comfort—in family and property and popular favor—the lack of which is the cause of all your trouble? Can you say that he would not have felt less keenly the death of those dearest to him, and the loss of property and popular favor, than he feels the bitter betrayal of a trusted friend, or the failure to be true and noble on the part of one to whom he had given the highest place in his heart, as a lofty ideal?

Troubles that are slightest often show most prominently, while troubles that are

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severest are least manifest. The troubles of those who call loudest for sympathy may be troubles that deserve little regard from others. On the other hand, persons who say no word of complaint to their fellows, and who would fain repress every sign of suffering of soul, are perhaps those whose constant cry of heart to God is: "Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man."

Ah, how little we can judge of the hidden troubles, past and present, of our fellows, by the calm exterior and the untroubled appearance which they present to us! Troubles that have been met as tribulation, with its true mission to the sufferer, do not leave the appearance of trouble on the outer man. That firm-set face, which seems to show a hard or a cold nature, may represent a constant inner struggle to be firm. That glow of holy beauty, on a countenance that impresses us as saintly, may come from the light of the refiner's fire which is burning day and

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night in the heart below. Those cheerful words and smiles, that appear to be only the overflow of a glad and undisturbed heart, may be the rich harvest from seeds which had not been quickened unless they died, and were not fruitful except as they were nourished from hidden graves.

It is this thought that Lucy Larcom phrases so beautifully :—

“ They said of her, ‘ She never can have felt
The sorrows that our deeper natures feel : ’
They said, ‘ Her placid lips have never spelt
Hard lessons taught by pain : her eyes reveal
No passionate yearning, no perplexed appeal
To other eyes. Life and her heart have dealt
With her but lightly.’—When the Pilgrims dwelt
First on these shores, lest savage hands should
steal
To precious graves with desecrating tread,
The burial-field was with the plowshare crossed,
And there the maize her silken tresses tossed.
With thanks those pilgrims ate their bitter bread,
While peaceful harvests hid what they had lost.
—What if her smiles concealed from you her
dead ? ”

Or again as Charles Kingsley puts it :
“ How many sweet and holy souls, who

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look cheerful enough before the eyes of man, yet have their secret sorrows. They carry their cross unseen all day long, and lie down to sleep on it at night ; and they will carry it perhaps for years and years, and to their graves, and to the throne of Christ, before they lay it down ; and none but they and Christ will ever know what it was." Such souls are in tribulation through their troubles. They are purified by the trial of troubles. Other souls are merely troubled by their trials. They gain nothing by being sore pressed and disturbed.

Trouble is not on the surface. Trouble is not alike to all. Trouble is not to be measured by one man for another. There is a basis of truth for any one of us in the negro refrain :

" Nobody knows de trouble I has :
Nobody knows but Jesus."

Each soul knows its own trouble—and only its own. It is not for us to expect that others can measure our trouble ; nor have we the ability or the right to pass upon

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theirs. We cannot understand the cause or the extent of the whirl in their hearts that makes it seem as if the very foundations of the earth were being swept away ; nor can they realize how we can have quite as severe trouble from quite a different cause.

But to them and to us there should be comfort at every such time in the thought that One who fully knows our trouble sympathizes with us in it all most tenderly, and is able and ready to bring us safely through it.

“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear though the earth be
removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the
midst of the sea ;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling
thereof.
The Lord of hosts is with us.
The God of Jacob is our refuge.”

He who knows our trials and troubles,
and is touched with the feeling of our in-

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firmities, speaks words of peace to every storm-tossed soul when he says lovingly :
“ Let not your heart be troubled : believe in God, believe also in me.” Believing in Jesus as our Friend, our Saviour, our Life, we have rest and peace in him. We are no longer troubled by our troubles.

III

Tested by Fire

Some of the best things in the world are the results of fire processes, or are proof against the destroying power of fire. Diamonds among gems, and granite among rocks, were called into being by the processes of fire. Gold and silver, for which so many are ready to sell their lives and souls, are indestructible in the trial by fire. Character, which is worth more than silver and gold and diamonds, and which is firmer and more durable than granite, cannot be at its best without fire-testing, and it is proof against fire.

Men have recognized in fire a symbol of Deity, and have bowed before it in reverent worship, because of its power to give warmth and life in the universe. Yet the destructive power of fire is terrible, and men shrink from it in dread. The cry of

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“Fire!” arousing one from his sleep at night, in his home on the land, or in a vessel in mid-ocean, strikes terror to the stoutest heart; and he who looks at the smoking ruins of a great city swept away by the flames in a few brief hours, shrinks from the thought that “the fire itself shall prove each man’s work of what sort it is.”

But fire is not wholly destructive. Fire is one form of tribulation. Its testing power is a separating power. It purifies and refines while it seems to consume; and that which comes through the flames unharmed, is worth all the more for its freedom from that which fire could burn away. The promises of God to his children who are brought to the test of fire in the furnace of affliction and suffering, are, in themselves, with all their words of comfort and peace, a suggestion of the truth that those whom God loves most dearly shall have their tribulation in the midst of the flames.

God does not say to the child of his

Tested by Fire

love, "Thou shalt never be put to the test of fire;" but he does say, "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." It was the three men who were true to God in the midst of an idolatrous people, whom God permitted to be bound hand and foot and cast into a burning fiery furnace, in the plain of Dura. Those loved ones of God were not kept out of the flames, but they were kept while in the flames. The fire loosed and burned away their bonds, and they walked in freedom in the midst of the fire, and had no hurt; and there walked, in loving companionship with them, one whose aspect was of heavenly form and bearing.

Those men must, in their very natures, have had a shrinking from the test of fire; and they may have wondered why God permitted them to be called to it. But when they were in the midst of the flames, because they would not shirk their duty, they had such rest and peace there as they

In Tribulation

could have found nowhere else in the universe ; and when they emerged from the furnace, it was found that "the fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed." And it has been the same with God's dear children ever since that day. Often those who love God and whom God loves are called to serve God in the burning fiery furnace ; and however they may shrink from entering the flames, they find rest and peace in the fire's center. As Miss Havergal reminds us :

" They say there is a hollow, safe and still,
A point of coolness and repose
Within the center of a flame, where life might dwell
Unharmed and unconsumed, as in a luminous
shell ;
Which the bright walls of fire inclose
In breachless splendor ; barrier that no foes
Could pass at will."

Let us joy, therefore, as we enter the furnace of trial, in the thought that we can be nearer to God in the center of the flame than we could be in the open air on a bed of roses !

Tested by Fire

Every child of God, in appreciation of this truth, can say, with Julius Sturm, as he feels the fiercest heat of this furnace flame :

“ Pain’s furnace-heat within me quivers,
God’s breath upon the fire doth blow,
And all my heart in anguish shivers,
And trembles at the fiery glow ;
And yet I whisper, ‘ As God will ! ’
And in his hottest fire hold still.”

The choicest treasures of personal character are wrought out and manifested by means of the furnace fires of pain and suffering. Those who help us in times of our fiery trial are those who have themselves been helped in and by the fire. Much has been purged out of their natures, and that which remains is more valuable because of the loss.

As Bushnell says, of those on whom the flames of suffering have been doing their work : “ It will be seen that in all cases of long-continued and very severe suffering, there is a look of gentled, perhaps we should say broken, feeling. The gait is

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softer, the motions less abrupt, and there is a lingering moan, we fancy, in the voice, and a certain dewy tremor of tear in the eye. It is as if the man's wilfulness had been fined, or at least partly broken. He may be a personal stranger, yet we see by all his demonstrations that he has come out of the fire, and is tempered to the sway of many things he cannot resist. Thus it is that a great many of the best and holiest examples of piety are such as have been fined and finished in the crucible of pain."

Yet it is not a weakened or a merely passive nature that is thus gentled and subdued. Only a strong nature can stand the fiery trial successfully, and right endurance is far more than mere submission. As Bushnell says, again: "Passivity is not the true lesson; for a bulrush bowing to the wind could take that lesson as well. Neither is it to brace up all our force in a tough strain of stoical energy, refusing to feel. But it is to set our whole activity quietly, manfully, down upon the having

Tested by Fire

learned well what our fiery teacher will show us. To wade through months of pain, to spin out years of weariness and storm, can be done triumphantly only by such as can resolutely welcome the discipline their nature wants. And the man or woman who has learned to suffer well has gotten the highest of mortal victories."

A keen observer of character can say, with Miss Procter, of the signs of the refining fire upon any one of us :

" I shall know by the gleam and glitter
Of the golden chain you wear,
By your heart's calm strength in loving,
Of the fire they have had to bear.
Beat on, true heart, forever ;
Shine bright, strong golden chain ;
And bless the cleansing fire,
And the furnace of living pain."

How the Apostle's words of comfort, in view of this truth, come home to those of us who are in the furnace of trial just now !
" Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a

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strange thing happened unto you : but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice ; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

There is comfort, even beyond the thought of the refining power of the furnace over the gold by its separation from the debasing dross. The very dross and ashes and slag of the furnace may, through the skill of the chemist, become a means of beauty, or of cleansing, or of fertilizing, and thus of life. Out of the slag of the iron-furnaces in the Basic process steel works, there is manufactured an odorless phosphate which is claimed to be of exceptional value as a fertilizer. As its

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enthusiastic discoverers claim: "The odorless phosphate makes plump wheat, full ears of corn, solid oranges, juicy peaches, and fills all the fruit with luscious, delicately flavored juices that are peculiar to its odorless character. It is odorless as wood ashes, pure as mountain water, healthy as a sunbeam, a quick and vigorous fertilizer." Ashes enter largely into the composition of cleansing soaps, and a brilliant diamond has been brought into being out of intensified charcoal.

So, also, in the spiritual furnace, even though there be no residuum of pure gold as an outcome of the fire-testing process when we are subjected to it, the very dross of our natures may, by the power of the divine Chemist, be made a means of service to others in the Lord's earthly domain. Our characters, when thus tested, may fail to show that strength and vigor and preciousness which command admiration and inspire courage on the part of those who observe us. Yet if we accept the furnace

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as the place in which we are to serve and honor our Master, the spirit displayed by us, even in our weakness and failure, may be a means of enriching other lives more precious than our own. "The base things of the world, and the things that are despised," doth "God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are," and that he might secure a blessing to all.

When we find ourselves in the furnace of trial, as sooner or later we are sure to, even if we are not already there, let us understand that the furnace is the best place for us, and that its fires are for our testing. If there is gold in our characters, that gold will come forth refined. If there is in us nothing but dross, that very dross may be made a means of fuller life to others, when we have seemed to fail. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace," or to use us for his honor as our lives pass away in the flames.

IV

By Pruning and Pressing

In Oriental thought the vine is a symbol of fruitful life. The palm needs to be planted near living waters, and the olive gives much of its strength to wood and leaf. But the vine can gain sustenance on the rocky hillside, while its whole being goes out in its fruitage. It is through many tribulations that the fruit of the vine comes to perfection; and it finds its value under pruning and pressing.

The "fruit of the vine" is more than wine; it is a synonym of outpoured life. "Life" and "blood" are interchangeable words in the sacred record, and the "blood of the grape," as "the fruit of the vine," is the "life" of the vine and the grape. From time immemorial men have covenanted with one another by drinking one another's blood, or by drinking together

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from a common cup of "the blood of the grape," or "the fruit of the vine."

When, therefore, our Lord gave to his disciples of "this fruit of the vine" as his very "blood" he made them partakers of his very life. And when he told them that he was "the true vine," and they were "the branches," and that their value was measured by their fruit-bearing power, he taught them the truth of truths concerning spiritual life and Christian service, and the gain of improved tribulation.

As branches of the true vine we must be constant fruit-bearers, or we have no right to draw nourishment from the parent stock. And the fruit we bear is not for ourselves, but for others. Only as we give of our lives are we entitled to live. As W. M. L. Jay reminds every one of us :

"Nor for thine own,
But others' weal, thou bearest fruit ;
Thy gain is in thy deeper root,
In twining branches stronger grown
And richer store of sap to thrill
Into new fruitage year by year."

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And we cannot give of our life's blood to others except through suffering. Hence, to be a living disciple of Jesus is to be unceasingly a sufferer in the service of Jesus.

Ugo Bassi's famous sermon in the hospital, on "The Vine and its Branches," has the lesson for us all from the teachings of our Lord, in his assignment to us of our place and our service.

"Let us consider now this life of the vine,
Whereof we are partakers: we shall see
Its way is not of pleasure nor of ease.
It groweth not like the wild trailing weeds
Whither it willeth, flowering here and there ;
Or lifting up proud blossoms to the sun,
Kissed by the butterflies, and glad for life,
And glorious in their beautiful array ;
Or running into lovely labyrinths
Of many forms and many fantasies,
Rejoicing in its own luxuriant life.

"The flower of the vine is but a little thing,
The least part of its life;—you scarce could tell
It ever had a flower ; the fruit begins
Almost before the flower has had its day.

"And as it grows, it is not free to heaven,
But tied to a stake ; and if its arms stretch out,

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It is but crosswise, also forced and bound ;
And so it draws out of the hard hillside,
Fixed in its own place, its own food of life ;
And quickens with it, breaking forth in bud,
Joyous and green, and exquisite of form,
Wreathed lightly into tendril, leaf, and bloom.
Yea, the grace of the green vine makes all the land
Lovely in springtime ; and it still grows on
Faster, in lavishness of its own life ;
Till the fair shoots begin to wind and wave
In the blue air, and feel how sweet it is.

“ But so they leave it not ; the husbandman
Comes early, with the pruning-hooks and shears,
And strips it bare of all its innocent pride,
And wandering garlands, and cuts deep and sure,
Unsparing for its tenderness and joy.
And in its loss and pain it wasteth not ;
But yields itself with unabated life,
More perfect under the despoiling hand.
The bleeding limbs are hardened into wood ;
The thinned-out bunches ripen into fruit
More full and precious, to the purple prime.

“ And still, the more it grows, the straitlier bound
Are all its branches ; and as rounds the fruit,
And the heart's crimson comes to show in it,
And it advances to its hour,—its leaves
Begin to droop and wither in the sun ;
But still the life-blood flows, and does not fail,
All into fruitfulness, all into form.

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“ Then comes the vintage, for the days are ripe,
And surely now in its perfected bloom
It may rejoice a little in its crown,
Though it bend low beneath the weight of it,
Wrought out of the long striving of its heart.
But ah ! the hands are ready to tear down
The treasures of the grapes ; the feet are there
To tread them in the wine-press, gathered in ;
Until the blood-red rivers of the wine
Run over, and the land is full of joy.

“ But the vine standeth stripped and desolate,
Having given all ; and now its own dark time
Is come, and no man payeth back to it
The comfort and the glory of its gift ;
But rather, now most merciless, all pain
And loss are piled together, as its days
Decline, and the spring sap has ceased to flow.
Now is it cut back to the very stem ;
Despoiled, disfigured, left a leafless stock,
Alone through all the dark days that shall come.
And all the winter-time the wine gives joy
To those who else were dismal in the cold ;
But the vine standeth out amid the frost ;
And after all, hath only this grace left,
That it endures in long, lone steadfastness
The winter through :—and next year blooms again :
Not bitter for the torment undergone,
Not barren for the fulness yielded up ;
As fair and fruitful towards the sacrifice
As if no touch had ever come to it

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But the soft airs of heaven and dews of earth ;—
And so fulfils itself in love once more.

“And now, what more shall I say ? Do I need here
To draw the lesson of this life, or say
More than these few words, following up the text :—
The vine from every living limb bleeds wine ;
Is it the poorer for that spirit shed ?
The drunkard and the wanton drink thereof ;
Are they the richer for that gift’s excess ?
Measure thy life by loss instead of gain ;
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth ;
For love’s strength standeth in love’s sacrifice ;
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.”

If we share with Christ in “the fruit of the vine,” we must be “partakers of Christ’s sufferings ;” and we can be glad accordingly “with exceeding joy.” The “fruit of the vine” is outpoured life, and he who bears much fruit must suffer much. “Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God,” as sharers of the life of the True Vine.

V

Improving Chastisement

“Chastisement” is not a pleasant word, any more than tribulation, as we are accustomed to think of it and to use it. Chastisement is ordinarily connected in our minds with the idea of displeasure and severity on the part of him who employs it, and with suffering and recoil on the part of him who is its subject. It is, indeed, not altogether separated in our thoughts from the idea of punishment for transgression, an idea in which the element of justice is far more prominent than that of love.

We speak of ourselves or of others as being “sorely chastened,” and there is a suggestion in our tone, at such a time, of a call for pity on behalf of the chastened one. We are all of us ready to agree with the Apostle so far as to say, “All chastening

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seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous ;” and he who is least subject to chastening is, in our ordinary thought, most highly favored of God.

Yet “chastisement” is, in its root-idea, “correction” as a means of improvement. It is akin to instruction and guidance and training. It is, indeed, a phase of tribulation, for the purpose of refining and purifying. It represents the work of the father, the teacher, the trainer, the guide. Only because he who trains and guides must persistently correct the errors of him whom he has in charge, does the idea of chastisement become coincident in our minds with the idea of severity on the part of him who administers it, and with recoil on the part of him to whom it is administered.

In primitive thought the “rod” is a symbol of authority, and its use is synonymous with punishment; but, with improved conceptions of parental authority and government, the use of the rod is recognized

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as for the loving guidance and control in the correct way of the one under training. The rod, like the flail, is designed to beat out, or to thresh out, the evil and the worthless from the good and the precious. Hence chastisement is looked upon by us as something to be dreaded or as something to be welcomed, as something to be endured with patience or as something to be rejoiced over in gladness, according as we perceive the immediate discomfort of it to ourselves, or the wisdom and love of its prompting.

It makes all the difference in the world whether we look at the bitter mixture which our physician prescribes for us in a critical hour of disease, or at the loving physician who prescribes it as a means of our rescue from death and our help toward health; at the hard lessons set us by the teacher in our early school-days, or at the wise and considerate teacher who is seeking thereby to develop and train our minds into the fullest exercise of their

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best powers; at the corrections and denials that come to us from a watchful parent, or at the devoted parent to whom we are dear as life itself, and who is thus evidencing his unfailing affection and his purpose of our completest training. So, also, it makes all the difference in the world whether we look at our providential chastisements as chastisements, or at the loving Father who is proving his love by these chastisements.

If we look at the chastening, it seemeth to be "not joyous, but grievous." If we look at God as our loving Father, we can be sure that whatever he sends to us is the best thing possible for us; and therefore his chastenings are to be welcomed as a fresh proof of his affection. Thus it is that Eliphaz, one of the friends of Job, says :

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth :
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the
Almighty."

Thus it is that Solomon approves the proverbial injunction :

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“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the
Lord;
Neither be weary of his reproof:
For whom the Lord loveth he reproveth;
Even as a father the son whom he delighteth.”

And thus it is that the Apostle expands and re-emphasizes this truth of the ages: “God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? . . . We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

Chastening improved is a means of spiritual cultivation and refinement. Why, then, should we speak of a man as “sorely chastened,” when we would not speak of him as “sorely cultivated,” or as “sorely refined”? It is not because the primitive idea of “chastisement” suggests a more painful

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process than that of "cultivation," which includes the tearing up of the surface with the plowshare, or than that of "refinement," with its thought of being cast into the furnace of fire; but it is rather because in the case of "refinement" and of "cultivation" we think of the satisfactory *results* of the process, through its improving, while in the case of "chastisement" we center our thoughts on the *process* itself.

Here is where we wrong our loving Father, when we give the chief place in our minds to the chastisements which he sends to us in love, instead of thinking of the end that he lovingly has in view in his sending those chastisements upon us, or yet better of him who has sent them as evidences of his love.

There is a lesson to us all in the teachings, on this point, of Rabia, a Muhammadan saint of a thousand years ago. James Freeman Clarke has translated that lesson from the Persian, through the German of Tholuck:

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- “ Rabia, sick upon her bed,
By two saints was visited,—
- “ Holy Malik, Hassan wise ;
Men of mark in Moslem eyes.
- “ Hassan said, ‘ Whose prayer is pure
God’s chastisements will endure.’
- “ Malik, from a deeper sense
Uttered his experience :
- “ ‘ He who loves his Master’s choice
Will in chastisement rejoice.’
- “ Rabia saw some selfish will
In their maxims lingering still,
- “ And replied : ‘ O men of grace !
He who sees the Master’s face
- “ ‘ Will not in his prayer recall
That he is chastised at all ! ’ ”

As a matter of fact, we give quite too much prominence to chastisements as chastisements in our Father’s dealings with us. We take it upon ourselves to divide our experiences into two great classes,—of blessings and chastisements,—when in reality all chastisements are in themselves blessings, while, in a larger sense, all bless-

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ings are chastisements. We are often inclined to pride ourselves on enduring chastisements bravely; and if, forsooth, we come to rejoice in chastisements as surely sent for our good, we think that we have made highest attainment in grace, whereas it ought to be so that the transcendent love of our Father should cause us to lose sight of all distinctions between those of his ways that please us and those that give us discomfort.

It is well for us when we can say, while wincing under providential chastisements : "Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him." It is better when we are so far along toward the right that our heart-cry in the very valley of death's shade can be, "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." It is best of all when our thoughts are so full of the loving Father himself that our grateful words spring forth : "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

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The submission of self to God is good ; the glad surrender of self to God is better ; the utter forgetfulness of self in the soul-filling thought of God is best of all.

How unfair it would be for a son to tell others of the trials to which his loving father's course had subjected him, and of his fidelity in enduring them all ! Nor would it materially better the case if the son were all the time telling of the various reproofs and corrections he had had from his father, even though he admitted that all these had proved of benefit to him. A true son of a true father is so full of thought of his loving father as a loving father, that his mind cannot be dwelling on the unpleasant phases of his experience as the recipient of that father's love.

So ought it to be with every child of the All Father ; the glad thought of the Father himself is the cause of rejoicing above all memory of any special way of the Father that has caused temporary sadness or gladness. Who of us shall repine because of

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his Father's chastenings? Who, indeed, shall even rejoice because of those chastenings, in comparison with his rejoicing in the thought of the Father who has sent them in wisdom and love? Let every one of us, on the contrary, so improve his chastenings that he may be ready to say to that Father :

“ When darkness gathers round my path,
And all my song-birds cease to sing,
I know it is not sent in wrath,—
'Tis but the shadow of thy wing !

“ When dancing sunbeams round me shine,
And Joy and Peacefulness embrace,
I know the radiance is not mine,—
'Tis just the brightness of thy face !”

VI

Suffering as a Duty

What is "suffering"? "Suffer" is from the Latin *sub*, "under," and *fero*, "to bear;" "to bear under." "To suffer" means variously, "to feel or bear what is painful, disagreeable, or distressing;" "to undergo," "to endure without sinking," "to support bravely or unflinchingly;" "to sustain;" "not to sink under." "Suffering" is the act or condition of enduring. The root-idea of "suffering" is, that the sufferer is underneath, and the burden is on him. To suffer is to continue underneath, instead of slipping out from under; to endure as a bearer of the distressing burden, instead of shirking or evading the disagreeable task of its bearing.

Suffering is never, in itself, desirable. No phase of tribulation is in itself attractive, and suffering is reckoned as one

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phase of tribulation. Suffering by its very nature forbids the possibility of its being attractive. The constant temptation of a sufferer is, to be rid of his suffering if he can be; and the inevitable inclination of one who is not a sufferer, is to avoid assuming any proffered burden which is sure to prove a cause of suffering. Yet suffering is often a duty; its seeking is often the only course of right to a person; and its endurance is often the test of one's manhood, or one's womanhood. The *discomforts* of suffering need no emphasis to any son or daughter of Adam. The *duty* of suffering is not sufficiently apprehended even by many a disciple of Him who was made "perfect through sufferings."

A longing for ease and repose is of man's innermost nature. The desire to escape from suffering is as instinctive as the love of life. The cry of "the sweet psalmist of Israel," in his hour of trial, is the cry of every pain-tried soul :

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“ And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove !
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.
Lo, then would I wander far off,
And remain in the wilderness :
I would hasten my escape
From the windy storm and tempest.”

And there is no invitation of David's Greater Son which is fuller of comfort and hope than his assuring words: “ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Rest is promised, even if it be not yet attained. In the thought of this assurance, every believing soul joins with the Apostle in his ejaculation: “ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

But just what this divinely promised rest is, and when it is to be attained to, is a question about which different minds have very different understandings. The commoner thought is, that the rest which one has a right to seek after, and to delight in, is an absolute freedom from trial and pain ;

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exemption from suffering, even if at the cost of exemption from feeling.

“ ‘There is no joy but calm,’

the poet sings. And in his imagining of calm :

“ How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream !
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the
height.”

The form of religion which even to-day is perhaps accepted by more persons than are believers in any other one form of religion, has its very basis on the assumption that the chiefest desire of the human soul is, and should be, an escape from “suffering,” and that as suffering is inseparable from consciousness, therefore an end of consciousness is the soul’s highest hope. Thus the Booddhists, who include one-third or more of the human race, have, as their conception of the heavenly state, an unconscious and an eternally dreamless

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repose, which they call *Nirwana*. Only thus and there, as they consider it, can it be truly said of any soul :

“ All is ended now, the hope, the fear, the sorrow,
All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied
longing ;
All the dull, deep pain, and constant anguish of
patience.”

Only of those who are in that state can they conceive it as being said truly :
“ Blessed are the dead, . . . that they may rest from their labors.” And there is no little similarity between the innermost thought of many of the ease-lovers in the realms of Christianity, and the many more ease-lovers who are in the domain of Booddhism.

Whatever may be the longing of the natural heart, and whatever may be the teachings of the most widely popular of false religions, in the direction of a selfish ease-giving rest, the whole spirit of the gospel of Jesus breathes of the gain, and of the duty, of suffering ; while all the gospel

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precepts and all the gospel illustrations in this sphere indicate that the "rest" which is given on earth to the Christian believer is a rest while in suffering, rather than a rest from suffering. "It behooved Christ to suffer;" "leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." And "as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," even "so also are ye [partakers] of the comfort" which is in and from Christ, in his triumph over evil.

He who promises "rest" to all who will come to him, promises them "tribulation" also; and with tribulation there comes suffering. Christ's conditional promise of eternal rest is, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." Contentment and endurance in suffering are the privilege and the duty of every true disciple of Jesus.

As are the teachings of the gospel of Jesus, so are the teachings of the highest and noblest experiences of the children of men. There is a gain in suffering. True

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rest is not in unthinking ease. Only through prolonged endurance is there any real attainment of a worthy soul-enjoyment. God sends us no gift with choicer possibilities in it than are enwrapped in suffering :

“ Though sharpest anguish hearts may wring,
Though bosoms torn may be,
Yet suffering is a holy thing ;
Without it, what were we ? ”

The rest which best refreshes the sufferer is the rest of a worthy purpose in suffering.

“ 'Tis loving and serving the highest and best ;
'Tis onward, unswerving,—and that is true rest.”

True manhood will not cease, nor desire to cease, from continued and progressive action, at whatever cost that action must be maintained. True manhood is virtue. Virtue cannot be selfishly dormant.

“ Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—

Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory, she :

Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.”

Without conflict, endurance, and triumph

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there is no high development of personal being. Undisturbed ease cannot secure a sturdy and vigorous manhood. Sainthood attained through triumph over evil is more than angelic life that never experienced moral gain by battlings with sin. A saved soul has joy that can never be known by a soul that was not in peril from the arch-enemy of souls. As Miss Hamilton says :

“ Better to be driven
By adverse winds upon the coast of Heaven,
Better to be,
As it were, shipwrecked upon its rocks
By fiercest shocks,
Than to sail on across a waveless sea
Into a Christless immortality.”

Even among the Booddhists, there are millions upon millions who recognize the low selfishness of a soul's desire to find repose in an unconscious isolation of useless being, while “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain,” with a need of sympathy and help in endurance ; and the very theogony of Booddhism has been, in certain regions, revised, to meet

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the higher and nobler conception of a more generous spirit, and a worthier aim of existence.

Among the Chinese, many years ago, the Booddhists brought forward a new divinity, "whose highest merit was that, having reached the edge of Nirwana, she declined to enter, preferring to remain where she could hear the cries, and succor the calamities, of those who were struggling with the manifold evils of a world of change." When the repose of an unconscious oblivion was already before her, she chose to suffer on in sympathy and in unselfish endeavor, in order to be a blessing to others, rather than to find an ignoble personal relief in the neglect of duty to other sufferers. "Tsz'-pei Kwan-yin," she is called, or "the merciful goddess who hears the prayers"—of sufferers.

In the temples of China the image of Kwan-yin finds a place, where "she is represented with a thousand hands ready to succor human suffering;" or, again, as

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holding in her arms a little babe, as illustrative of the mother-spirit of unselfish tenderness. And there is a lesson for us in this imperfect suggestion from Buddhism, which corresponds with the more beautiful exhibit of its truth in the gospel of Jesus; a lesson of the duty of suffering on for the sake of others, as well as for our own sakes, even when the choice would seem to be ours of an escape from suffering, into a selfish and an undisturbed repose.

The Booddhistic idea of suffering, as something essentially and always evil, and as something to be evaded at any and every cost, has quite too much tolerance in the minds of many who call themselves Christians. The comfort of a halfway "Nirwana" has its selfish attractions to not a few who are fully familiar with the teachings of the gospel of Jesus.

The man who commits suicide because he is tired of his sufferings, is a selfish and cowardly shirker of his plain duty

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of continued endurance in those sufferings. He who takes to drink to drown his sorrows, is similarly unfaithful in his duty of suffering. The husband or the wife who seeks a sundering of the marital tie, merely because every breath of that married life is another breath of suffering, is unmistakably faithless to the promised duty of being true, in better or in worse, until death itself should part that twain-one. So, again, with parent and child, with teacher and scholar, with friend and friend. How common it is to hear, as a proffered excuse for an abandonment of endurance in that sphere, that endurance there is a cause of constant suffering !

There can even be found those who count themselves true men, who will shamelessly tell of their turning away in selfishness from wife or child in some hour of their loved one's personal pain, because they "never could endure the suffering of such an hour." And, again, there are selfish women who say that they are ready to

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give *money* for the sick or the poor, but they cannot visit personally in the homes of suffering, because that would cause them suffering. The Booddhistic "Kwan-yin" may, if she will, remain in the realm of suffering, and may use her thousand hands in a ministry of sympathy and of relief; but these so-called Christian disciples would selfishly plunge into the oblivion of Nirwana, in order to shirk their appointed duty of suffering.

Ought Chinese Booddhism to have such a seeming advantage as this over any phase of our more exalted Christianity?

VII

Struggling to Live

Death, and not life, is the order of nature. Any person or thing that lives, lives in spite of the mere "laws of nature." Life is supernatural, rather than natural. Only as a power or a force additional to and above mere material nature is continually operative against the "laws" of that nature, does life, as life, exist. Life is an observed fact in the universe; but life is not the result of any known "law of nature," nor is its origin or source to be accounted for by the operation of any such law. The existence and the continuance of life is extra-natural, or supernatural, and involves an incessant struggle with and mastery of the "laws of nature."

It is much the same in the realms of the physical, of the intellectual, and of the spiritual life. In the lower order

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of physical nature, as in the higher order of spiritual nature, the beginning of life is the introduction of an element that cannot be accounted for by the operation of any known law of nature; and the progress of life in all its forms and phases is in opposition to and in subjugation of the forces that were before operative in the realm of matter.

“Biology,” or the science of life, recognizes the existence of life as a fact which it is unable to account for; and it deals with the method of life’s workings, rather than with life’s source and origin. That which biology begins with as a recognized but an unaccountable fact in nature, is an extra-natural or supernatural force in the universe, which exists by bringing into subjection and ministry the workings of the recognized laws of nature as apart from that force.

The very earliest forms of vegetable life, in the lichen and the fern, exhibit an element of aspiration, working against the

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general law of gravitation, and making subservient to its purposes inert matter of various kinds,—thereby changing the order and direction of material nature. And this process goes on all the way along in the vegetable world, until its illustration is found in the uprearing of the lofty oak by means of this supernatural force of life, which lifts the nourishing sap to the extent of forty-five pounds to a square inch in every hundred feet of elevation, in defiance of the attraction of gravitation and of the oppositions of the wind and the rain, save as they are made tributary to this aspiring supernatural force in the universe. Up toward the light and the sky, away from the darkness, the rock, and the mud, vegetable life aspires, and will not be held back and down.

With animal life the element of volition is added to that of aspiration in the constant struggle against the general laws of nature. Sentient life not only aspires, but wills to bring into subjection to its use that

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which would otherwise bar its progress or forbid its existence. The bird selects the material for its nest, and carries it up to a chosen spot in defiance of the law of gravitation, arranging it there in such a way as to guard it from the destructive sweep of the winds, and from the immediate operation of tendencies to decay, while planning for the reproduction and continued preservation of life in the realm of bird nature. The beaver deliberately wills to check the growth of a selected tree, and to use a portion of it for the stoppage of the waters in their flow, and for the making of a home for itself and its offspring.

In every phase of animal life there is a struggle for the mastery over lower forms of life, in order to maintain its own existence, and to make progress in the line of its volitions ; and only as life consents to battle and subdue the forces of mere nature, can it fulfil its mission or be true to its best aspirations.

It is nature's business to destroy life ;

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and the world of nature does not owe a living to any person or thing. It is life's business to fight in order to live; and unless life can subdue nature, and hold it in subjection, it will come into bondage to nature; and the bondage of nature is death. All life is a ceaseless struggle, and where there is no struggle there is no real life.

The highest form of life is spiritual life; and in this realm, as in the lower realms, the laws of nature which are operative in the universe tend to hold down, and to pull back, and to retard, and to destroy; and only as spiritual life will struggle for the mastery of all opposing forces, and make them tributary to its aspiring volitions, can it make progress, or even continue to exist. Spiritual life is not an evolution in the order of nature's development, but it is a gift to man from the Source of all life. He who is a possessor of spiritual life as a supernatural force, has power for the battling and the overcoming of all the opposings of nature in the physical, the

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intellectual, and the moral realms; but if he ceases to battle, he ceases to overcome, and he is already succumbing to death as the constant enemy of life.

In the old Egyptian "Book of the Dead," lost souls are spoken of as the "Children of Failure;" and any soul that will not struggle in spiritual life to final success, is simply a child of failure. Living is inseparable from struggling. To cease struggling is to cease living.

Struggling to live is the primal form of tribulation assured in this world to every child of God and follower of Jesus. The obstacles to peaceful life which beset us continually on every side, pressing in upon us to impede our progress and to give us distress and anguish as we move forward, are inevitably incident to our human existence in a world below the highest plane of life eternal. We should never wonder at the call here below to this struggle to live. We should rather welcome it as an earnest of our progress upward and of our final

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triumph over death. The thought of every one of us can be with Isaac Watts, in this ceaseless struggle to live in the midst of our tribulations.

“ Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas ?

“ Sure I must fight, if I would reign.
Increase my courage, Lord ;
I'd bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word.”

“ The last enemy that shall be abolished is death,” and as long as death exists it is the enemy of life, and a struggle with it is the sign and cost of living.

The one perfect Life lived here on earth was a life of constant struggling; and that life was made perfect, or complete, through suffering. He who would be a partaker of that life in its glorious triumph, must also be a partaker of that life in its constant suffering and struggling. There is no other road to final victory than the road

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that was trod by His bleeding feet. This lesson is beautifully taught in the words of Miss Anna E. Hamilton :

“As once towards heaven my face was set,
I came unto a place where two ways met;
One led to Paradise, and one away,
And, fearful of myself lest I should stray,
I paused, that I might know
Which was the way wherein I ought to go.
The first was one my weary eyes to please,
Winding along through pleasant fields of ease,
Beneath the shadows of fair branching trees.
‘This path of calm and solitude
Surely must lead to heaven!’ I cried,
In joyous mood.
‘Yon rugged one, so rough for weary feet,
The footpath of the world’s too busy street,
Lying amid the haunts of human strife,
Can never be the narrow way of life.’
But at that moment I thereon espied
A footprint bearing trace of having bled,
And knew it for the Christ’s, so bowed my head,
And followed where he led.”

VIII

In the Shadow of Death

Death, when it comes to us or to our dear ones, is a reality that must be met; but the shadow of death cast on the pathway of life, as an indication of an event approaching, is a cause of gloom that includes forebodings of evil beyond all that has yet come to us. Hence it is that the projected shadow of death is, in many a case, even more of a trial than death itself. And the shadow of death is over us all, and always.

"No sooner do we begin to live in this dying body," says St. Augustine, "than we begin to move ceaselessly towards death;" and, as we are reminded by Bishop Hall, "our cradle stands in our grave." From our very birth the shadow of death is over us, and there is never a moment in our earthly journeyings when the sky of our

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life is wholly free from the gathering clouds of death. At times the light is brighter, and again the shadow is heavier; and thus it is that our spirits are gladdened or saddened by our apparent condition for the hour.

In the hope of life, "we walk by faith, not by sight;" in the thought of death, we walk by fear, rather than by sight. For the quickening of our faith, and for the subduing of our fears, we have need of help from Him who has shared in our human experiences, and has triumphed over all that imperils us, that he "might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And through that help we can be steadfast unto the end.

The shadow of death over ourselves is to most of us a cause of less anxiety than the shadow of death over our dear ones. It is easier to trust God for ourselves than to trust him for those whom we love more than life. It is even easier to meet death

In the Shadow of Death

as a reality when it takes from us the most precious treasures of our heart, than it is to bear up courageously and with hope when the shadow of death seems to be darker than usual about their pathway. In watching over our loved ones when they are sick, and in giving play to our fears lest they should be sick, or should otherwise suffer harm, we "die daily." The anticipation of evils that may come to them transcends the reality of the evils which they actually endure. And so it is that the shadow of death as it falls on the pathway of others is a cause of gloom to us beyond the darkness of death itself.

A child complains of a sore-throat; at once the anxious mother thinks of diphtheria, and for weary hours, until all symptoms of disorder have passed away, that mother gropes wearily in the shadow of death, which is none the less gloomy for being only a shadow. Her child's hoarse cough in the night, or a show of rash on his neck by day, at another time, brings

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that same mother to a new experience of the shadow of death through imagined croup or scarlet-fever. Every stage of a long sickness, of one who is dear to us, is a new stage of progress through the gloom of death's shadow, even though the tired traveler is to come out again into the light of life beyond. The delay of a letter from an absent one; or the report of a disaster in a distant region, where that absent one may be; or the mere thinking over the possibilities of peril to him from unseen dangers,—brings the shadow of death close about a loving heart that waits and watches in uncertainty as to the hour of death's certain coming.

Many of us are walking in the shadow of death; all of us know something of its gloom. To us each and all there comes the proffer of guidance and cheer from Him who has passed through a lifetime of death's shadow, and who knows what of its imaginings have any basis of reality, and what are needless fears.

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"Christ leads us through no darker rooms
Than he went through before."

"For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tried like as we are." Therefore every one of us is privileged to say: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." In the deepest gloom of this valley, as we grope through it with those who are dearest to us, we can hear the ring of our Shepherd's staff, as he finds the way for us; and we can gain comfort from the touch of his rod, even while the darkness of the hour shuts him out from our sight.

Miss Havergal's song of cheer is to us all, even when the shadow of death is on our path.

"He who hath led will lead
All through the wilderness;
He who hath fed will feed;
He who hath blessed will bless;

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He who hath heard thy cry
Will never close his ear ;
He who hath marked thy faintest sigh
Will not forget thy tear.
He loveth always, faileth never,
So rest on him, to-day, forever !

“Then trust him for to-day,
As thine unfailing Friend,
And let him lead thee all the way,
Who loveth to the end.
And let the morrow rest
In his belovèd hand ;
His good is better than our best,
As we shall understand,—
If, trusting him who faileth never,
We rest on him, to-day, forever !”

IX

Waiting as a Duty

Every old soldier knows that the hardest thing in connection with a battle is the waiting under fire for orders to move. To push forward in the fight is exciting work, so exciting as to call out all the energies of a man, and to keep his mind full with thoughts of that which he has to do for the moment. He has no time then to think of danger, or to speculate upon chances.

But when a man has to stand, or to lie, in line, with the bullets whistling about him, or with the sound of the battle in his ears, and with nothing to do in the nature of action or of effort, he is sure to be thinking of danger, and fearing the results of delay, and to be suffering from the strain upon his nerves, which is all the intenser because there is nothing for his muscles to do.

As it is with the soldier in physical war-

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fare, so it is with the soldier in life's battles of every sort. Waiting under fire is harder than moving forward in the thick of the fight. Yet waiting is a large part of a man's duty in life, when he would fain be actively doing something.

Waiting for the hour of a school examination, waiting for an expected caller at one's home, or waiting for the hour when one may make a call of pleasure or of important business, waiting for one's turn at an after-dinner speech or for a part in an athletic contest, waiting for an expected train at a railway station or waiting for the time when one may take a train homeward,—all these are ordinary experiences in waiting. They tax the patience and the energies of the young and the old, and they are hard to bear.

A city business man, who had not indulged in the luxury of vacations, was induced to take a season of rest in the country. It did not suit his active mind, and when he was asked by a friend how it

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seemed to him, he answered, "I feel all the time as if I were waiting on the corner of the street for a car to come along." Many another man can appreciate that state of mental strain.

To wait on a sick-bed, or to wait by one, is a sore trial for the sufferer in body or in mind. And to wait, at a distance, for the slow passage of the hours or the days while disease is running its course with a loved one, and while there is nothing to do but to wait, is one of the severest tests of endurance to which human nature is called. Waiting for bad news, or waiting in doubt as to the nature of the coming news, is in many a case a greater strain on the mental powers than meeting the news at the worst when it does come. Yet just because waiting is so hard, waiting is the one duty of the hour to be endured bravely and in hope, when there is nothing to do but to wait. "If I could only do something, instead of waiting in utter inaction," says the longing soul. But you cannot do any-

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thing, except to wait; therefore you must be patient and courageous in waiting.

Patience is endurance in waiting at the call of God, and such patience is enjoined and commended as a Christian virtue and as a Christian duty. "In your patience ye shall win your souls," said our Lord to his disciples, as he foretold their trial, when distress would be in the army-encompassed city which was their home, and there would be nothing for them to do but to wait patiently for the end. In our patience we shall win our souls, when a like duty is ours in a like state of distress.

"Ye have need of patience," says the Apostle, "that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise." All of us have promises on which we may rest, for ourselves and for our dear ones, in the hour of the most anxious waiting; and we have need of patience, that, when we have done all we can do, we may wait to receive the fulfilment of those promises.

The Bible is full of injunctions to wait-

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ing, and of assurances of hope and faith in waiting.

“Wait on the Lord :

Be strong, and let thine heart take courage ;
Yea, wait thou on the Lord.”

“I will wait for the Lord, that hideth his face.”

“The Lord is good unto them that wait for him.”

“It is good that a man should hope and quietly
wait for the salvation of the Lord.”

“I am weary with my crying ; my throat is dried ;
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.”

The promised blessing may to our thought
tarry ; but it will not, as God sees it, delay.

“Though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely
come, it will not delay.”

“I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope.
My soul looketh for the Lord,
More than watchmen look for the morning,
Yea, more than watchmen for the morning.”

Patient waiting must be waiting in hope.
We have no right to be without hope, as
we wait the issue of God's ordering. “If
we hope for that which we see not, then do

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we with patience wait for it." Patient, hopeful waiting is hard work, when it is the only work possible to us in an emergency. But patient waiting is in its time the highest duty of a faithful soul. Others may have active service for the hour, in the plan of God.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

X

HoPíng thróugh Faíth

Faith in God is recognized by every child of God as a primal duty ; but hope in God is not always seen to be a factor in right faith. It is easy to admit that God's will should be accepted as final concerning ourselves and our dear ones ; but it is not so easy to look forward with confidence to the outcome of those dealings as sure to be bright and delightful. Yet hope is as truly a duty as is faith ; and faith in order to be at its best must have its active element of hope.

We are " saved through faith ; " we " live by faith ; " we " walk by faith ; " and " without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." But what is faith without hope ? " Faith is the assurance of things hoped for ; " " by hope were we saved," through " Christ Jesus our hope ; "

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and as God's dear children we are to "abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Ghost."

Faith looks upward. Hope looks forward. Faith rests everything on God. Hope expects everything from God. Faith is sure that God will do right. Hope is sure that God will send good. Faith is the basis of hope ; but without hope faith is imperfect and unsatisfying. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ?" says the Psalmist. "Hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." "We through the spirit," says the Apostle, "by faith wait for the hope of righteousness ;" and "if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

It is not enough to believe in God as over all, controlling, directing, restraining, according to his wisdom and goodness ; it is needful also to expect good at his hands continually. When things look dark to

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us, we have a right to hope for the light. There is such a thing as a despairing faith; and there is also such a thing as a gladly expectant faith. Faith without hope is despairing; faith with hope is gladly expectant. Hoping through faith is a Christian believer's duty.

Many a Christian believer is willing to bow his head in submissiveness of faith, who is not ready to lift up his head in the joy of hope. There are, indeed, those who seem to count it meritorious to face the worst as a possibility, rather than to hope for the best to the uttermost. Herein is an error. A child of God is never to sorrow as others who have no hope. A disciple of Christ is never to live as if he had no hope and were without God in the world. Abraham was a man of faith, and for that very reason he was a man of hope. "Without being weakened in faith" because of the hopelessness of his case, he was a man "who in hope believed against hope;" and so he became the father of the faithful and

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the father of the hoping. If we are his spiritual children, we shall ever be hoping in faith.

In time of sickness or of other peril, in the hour of saddest uncertainty, and of severest tribulation, we are not to fear for the worst, but we are to hope for the best. Knowing that sorer trials than we have ever known may be immediately before us in the providence of God, we can also know that God may have surprises of good for us beyond our extremest longings or our fondest anticipations. Why should we think that God will be readier to disappoint us, than to meet our wants?

If we trust God as we are entitled to, we shall look expectantly for that which is in the line of our requests as his children, so long as his refusal to answer our prayers is not explicitly made known to us; and when we have been disappointed in one thing, we ought to be all the more hopeful that another disappointment is not to be ours. If, indeed, disappointments are in store for

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us, let us not suffer from them before they must be met. But if the joy of our hearts is to be granted to us, let us not have grieved God by refusing to believe that he would send it as we desired.

There is a practical side to this matter as well as an ethical one. Not only is it wrong to expect disappointment, rather than cheer, from our all-loving Father, in his orderings in our behalf; but if we are without hope of success in a struggle we are making, we are unnerved for that struggle, and are liable to bring on troubles that would not otherwise have been ours.

Hope is divinely called "an anchor of the soul," an anchor "both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil;" and if we slip the cable of that anchor, we shall lose the good things that are in store for those who cling to it to the last. "Where there is no hope there can be no endeavor," says Dr. Johnson; and Coleridge tells us that

"Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve."

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Hope is always in order for a child of God. No matter what God has done for us, or is doing, or seems likely to do, we ought to expect better things and yet better in the opening future. In the eternal present there "abideth faith, hope, love, these three," and he who has both faith and love needs also hope.

"Above the dusky air
Shine the bright steps of hope,
And I, though from the lowest stair,
Would mount to heaven's cope.

"Thus yearning, I arise,
But heavily I move :
Alas that with such wistful eyes
My limbs so feeble prove !

"But can the morning fail,
Though dawn be dark and wild ?
Rejoice, O soul ! thou shalt prevail ;
Of light thou art the child.

"Thy hope, it shall be made
Thy strength, if it be bright ;
Thy limbs, so heavy in the shade,
Grow lighter in the light."

XI

Enduring in Hope

Attainment is a hope rather than a possession, and enduring and striving in hope is the normal condition of him who would attain. In all practical life, he who would have the highest good must strive after it through difficulties, and over obstacles; and, in the teachings of the Old Testament and of the New, spiritual rest and peace are found as a result of perseverance through tribulation, not in exemption from tribulation.

The voyage of life is over a tempestuous sea, and he who would find a haven of rest must endure the tossings and perils of that voyage to its end. The promise of the glad time when "there shall be no more sea" is yet unfulfilled. Hope can picture to us the joys which are to follow the safe ending of this voyage; but hope cannot

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lessen the perils that are to be passed before the thither-shore of the stormy sea is finally reached. It is comfort in trial, not freedom from trial, that the Psalmist rejoices over:

“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do
change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart
of the seas ;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling
thereof.
There is a river, the streams whereof make glad
the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most
High.”

This thought of the Psalmist has been the comforting thought of many a tempest-tossed believer from his day to ours. It was in the mind of one of God's children in the stormy days of our Civil War, during a peculiar experience on the southern coast of the United States. A government steamer was seeking an entrance to the

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harbor of St. Augustine, from the ocean side. A severe storm had prevailed along the coast, and increased the difficulty of crossing the bar which stretches across the face of Anastasia Bay. It was in the early morning, after a night of gloom.

The wind was still blowing a gale. Huge waves lifted themselves on every side of the cumbersome steamer, and rolled on to break in sullen roar along the sandy beach on either hand, or to boil and foam on the wide-extended hither shoal. As the unwieldy steamer was headed toward the coast, it rolled and swayed and creaked, as though its every beam and brace were giving way. On its careening, slippery, sea-swept forward deck stood a group of army officers intently watching the incidents of the perilous passage. Great flocks of sea-birds swooped and circled above the watchers with loud warning cries; and the snowy crests of the waves on the confronting bar seemed to shake defiance at the venturesome voyagers, forbidding their

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progress. Yet there was firm hope on the part of all who waited and watched for the issue of that struggle, because of their firm trust in him to whom their lives had been committed.

Far forward, in the very eyes of the steamer's bow, clinging to an iron-girt stanchion, stood the sturdy, weather-beaten old pilot of the port. Bronzed and grim, with bared head, his gray locks streaming in the wind, his face set as a flint to the coast before him, he noted with keen eye the familiar guide marks of the tortuous channel, and with deep, strong voice sounded out his words of command to the helmsman on the upper deck, who heeded his call as though it were divine.

Before that pilot, and before those anxious watchers, over the bar, out of the reach of ocean storms, on the far shore of the sheltered bay, there lay, in the morning sunlight, the quaint and quiet old Spanish city, its outlook made glad by streams of a quiet river on either hand;

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and none on that steamer's deck had doubt that they would soon have rest in that tempting retreat ; for the pilot whom they trusted was

“ A very present help in trouble.”

Every one of us is called to a like experience with this on his troubled life-voyage. There are storms above and about us. There are waves and shoals before us. The craft on which we journey is in ceaseless peril. But every one of us can have trust in the divine Pilot who guides and guards us. And the heart-cry of every anxious soul can be, with good Dean Alford :

“ One who has known in storms to sail
I have on board ;
Above the raging of the gale
I hear my Lord.
He holds me when the billows smite,
I shall not fall.
If sharp, 'tis short ; if long, 'tis light ;
He tempers all.
Safe to the land, safe to the land,—
The end is this ;
And then with him go hand in hand
Far into bliss.”

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Not the absence of dangers, but the hope of deliverance out of dangers, is the comfort of God's loved ones. As a godly writer has said: "God did not take up the three Hebrews out of the furnace of fire, but he came down and walked with them. He did not remove Daniel from the den of lions; he sent his angel to close the mouth of the beasts. He did not, in answer to the prayer of Paul, remove the thorn in the flesh; but he gave him a sufficiency of grace to sustain him."

The promise of God to every trustful believer is: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. . . . Fear not; for I am with thee." "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved."

XII

Toiling Hopelessly

“Hopelessness” is only another term for “despair,” the two words being really synonymous; and we are prone to feel that despair, or hopelessness, deprives effort of any possibility of good. Our thought, indeed, is, with the poets, that

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast;”
that

“The miserable have no other medicine
But only hope;”
that

“The wretch condemn’d with life to part
Still, still on hope relies,
And every pang that rends the heart
Bids expectation rise;”

and that

“Hence the most vital movement mortals feel
Is hope, the balm and life-blood of the soul.”

Yet, as a matter of fact, there is a constant call for hopeless or despairing effort in this

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world as it is ; and the truth stands out, in spite of our feeling, that there is often a direct gain from hopeless or despairing endeavor, beyond and above all gain which is possible where hope is an element of the struggle. At the best, however, hopeless effort is a phase of tribulation.

It is a pitiful sight to look into the vacant eyes of a hopeless idiot, or into the glaring countenance of one hopelessly insane. It is hardly less pitiful to look down upon the tired face of one hopelessly racked with pain, which must continue with increasing force while life lasts ; or to watch the hopeless wasting away of a form which is under the power of an incurable disease. It is sad to see an aged parent a helpless object of hopeless effort, with paralyzed limbs or deadened brain, living on only as a burden and a tax in a home which was once lightened and gladdened by the presence that is now a source of unintermitted discomfort. There is a gloomy aspect to those institutions for the in-

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curable, which actually close their doors against any who do not utterly despair, or who are not utterly despaired for; so again there is to those wards for the hopeless cases in other institutions, where diseases of the body or the mind are objects of treatment and of ministry.

But, with all the sadness or gloom of such an outlook, would any of us say that, because in these instances there is no hope of cure, there is therefore no gain in the loving ministry which is demanded for them? Could we question that, apart from any possibility of result to those who are cared for tenderly, there is a gain, unspeakably great, to those who thus minister in loving tenderness to the necessities of the hopeless objects of despairing endeavor—a larger and a nobler gain through the very fact of the hopelessness of the effort demanded?

Hopeless endeavor brings finer possibilities of unselfishness, in its immediate exercise, than can show themselves in effort

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which is prompted and cheered by substantial hope. So long as hope is an element of the struggle, there will be the thought of coming gain or reward as an incentive to correspondent action; but when hope is excluded, the chiefest inducement to struggle on in the line of loving ministry is the unselfish affection which makes such ministry in itself a delight.

This it is that so often renders the dependent and helpless parent a new power for good, in the home where his hopeless needs are a means of evoking and developing the truest and noblest traits of character in the children who are doing for him. This it is that causes many a hopeless invalid to be a center of light and joy in a home which is purified and cheered through the added necessity of forgetting self, and of living for one who can never rise up to return or requite this ministry of love. This it is that brings a spirit of surpassing tenderness into the manner and ways of the best of those who attend upon

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the incurable, or upon the hopelessly imbecile, in institutions where such cases are an object of special attention.

When, in fact, every prompting is outward, and every incentive is away from self; when there is no possibility of attainment or of requital; when the only gain which can be thought of is the gain of continued doing in the line of hopeless endeavor,—the effort which is demanded cannot but be noble and ennobling, and cannot but have its reward in the uplifting and the enlarging of the heart which is thus nobly exercised.

We are not likely to undervalue the benefits of hope, but we are in danger of overestimating its advantages; and it is well for us to consider that, unless we were sometimes called to hopeless endeavor, we should never know the highest gain which is possible from a generous and self-forgetful ministry of affection. Hope even imperils our spirit of restful contentment with what we have, by tempting us to look away

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from present good, in longing expectation of better things to be attained to. Thus it is that hope is sometimes peace-destroying, that

“ Hope, eager hope, th’assassin of our joy,
All present blessings treading under foot,
Is scarce a milder tyrant than despair.”

In this light it is that hope may deceive us by its very truth, and that its surest leading may be misleading. And here is the point of Carlyle’s satire :

“ What is hope ? A smiling rainbow
Children follow through the wet ;
'Tis not here—still yonder, yonder ;
Never urchin found it yet.”

In this sense, hopeless effort may be more gainful than effort that is full of hope ; and the return of good may be largest through the very fact that no return is a possibility. And so we have reason to be grateful that there are calls upon us here to struggle hopelessly in loving ministry to others, and to be contented with what is already ours in that struggle.

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Of course, it is only with reference to the life that is, that any hopeless endeavor can be called for; and it is only in loving ministry to our earthly fellows that a loving ministry can ever be in hopelessness; for all God-ward love is full of hope, and is sure of both reward and return beyond its uttermost giving or deserving. And it is because there is something of God-likeness in a love which goes out and goes on with no hope of return, that all hopeless ministry of love is so ennobling and so enriching, and that its gains transcend the gains of any love that wins return.

Love seeking and finding return is very beautiful; it is one of earth's brightest blessings. But love which loves on without thought or hope of return is still more beautiful; it has a touch of Christ-likeness in its moral beauty. It is this of which Whittier reminds us:

“ Love is sweet in any guise;
But its best is sacrifice.

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“ He who giving does not crave,
Likest is to Him who gave
Life itself the loved to save.”

And Helen Hunt would have us know that
this is ever the spirit of the truest, wor-
thiest love :

“ When love is strong
It never tarries to take heed
Or know if its return exceed
Its gift ; in its sweet haste no greed,
No strifes, belong.

“ It hardly asks
If it be loved at all ; to take
So barren seems, when it can make
Such bliss, for the belovèd's sake,
Of bitter tasks.”

And when a human love recognizes the
fact that it is hopeless love, yet lessens not
nor swerves because of its hopelessness,
that love has added power in refining and
purifying the heart which it fills ; and its
giver has a gain beyond all that any return
of love could bring to him.

A mother's love is never more saintly,
never nearer divine, than when she loves an

Totling Hopelessly

unloving son hopelessly. And the highest reach of human friendship is where one is lovingly and loyally an unswerving friend, with never a possibility of love returned or of love comprehended as it is. "It has seemed to me lately more possible than I knew," says Emerson, "to carry a friendship greatly, on one side, without due correspondence on the other. Why should I cumber myself with regrets that the receiver is not capacious? It never troubles the sun that some of his rays fall wide and vain into ungrateful space, and only a small part on the reflecting planet. . . . Thou art enlarged by thy own shining."

It is in this enlarged power of loving that there is the largest gain from hopeless loving. Thus it is that the loving heart might even say with generous-hearted Rose Terry Cooke, in despairing content:

"I give thee love as God gives light,
Aside from merit or from prayer;
Rejoicing in its own delight,
And freer than the lavish air.

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"As earth pours freely to the sea
Her thousand streams of wealth untold,
So flows my silent heart to thee,
Glad that its very sands are gold.

"What care I for thy carelessness?
I give from depths that overflow,
Regardless that their power to bless
Thy spirit cannot sound or know."

There are few things harder in this world than to love, or to minister lovingly, without a possibility of even that gain which comes from love recognized—where there is no hope of love returned. But there is hardly anything on earth nobler or more ennobling than just this hopeless ministry of love. It brings nothing back to the loving one, but it uplifts and enlarges the heart that thus loves; and herein is the gain of gains through all rightly directed endeavor that seems to be hopeless endeavor.

XIII

Never Giving Up

The severest test of manhood is never found in bright times, but only in dark times. It is not the man who has success when others are doing well, but it is the man who keeps up his courage, and struggles on, when everybody else is wavering or going down, who is the hero in the sight of God and men. It is an easy matter to make good time when both wind and tide are in one's favor, or when one is moving with the current; but it requires character and skill and daring to make head in spite of opposing forces, or to work successfully against the current.

Captain Paul Jones is taken as a type of the American naval officer in daring and persistency. In the terrible conflict between his vessel, the *Bon Homme Richard*, and the superior British man-of-war

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Serapis, when most of his guns were disabled, and nearly half of his men were killed or wounded, and a fire was raging in his hold, and his vessel was leaking and sinking, and his flag was shot away, Captain Pearson, of the Serapis, called out to him to know if he had surrendered. "Surrendered!" shouted back the intrepid American captain, in tones that brought victory out of defeat, "why, I've just begun to fight!" And he received the surrender of the Serapis in time to get his remaining men on board of her before his own little vessel sank out of sight.

It was said of brave General Zachary Taylor that his success as a commander was attributable to the fact that he never knew when he was whipped, and that on more than one occasion he won a victory after he was fairly defeated. It is this spirit of the commander, on land or on sea, which keeps him up and keeps him at it, in spite of all opposings and all discouragements, and prevents his yielding to despair while

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his life, or an atom of strength, remains to him, that marks the truly courageous man in any sphere of conflict, material, mental, or moral. He is the hero who never gives up.

In athletic contests it is by no means the men who are most muscular, or who are best trained, or who have most of dash and enthusiasm, who win the larger number of tests of skill and endurance. But it is the men who will not stay defeated when the others get the advantage of them, who, when "pressed on every side," are "not straitened;" who, when "smitten down," are "not destroyed;" who, as the world phrases it, "have most sand," or "grit," or persistency, and who keep up and keep at it through defeat to final victory.

In times of financial depression it is the man who sees his business shrinking, his expectations failing, his record of former difficulties and embarrassments transcended, his associates on every side giving way to the unexampled pressure, and who

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seems to himself, as well as to his fellows, to be in a hopeless plight, who yet will not give up, but will keep up and keep at it without flinching or failing through the worst to the uttermost, who shows himself the hero in hard times, and who survives them, or goes under with them fighting to the last. In hard times, business-wise, courage is more than capital, faith is better than sight, and a brave heart is the truest wisdom for the hour.

There are moral conflicts sorer and more bitter than any contest of brawn or of brain, and in these conflicts it is the man who will not give up who alone endures unto the end, and therefore is saved. Loved ones whose very presence was a constant inspiration to us have fallen from our side; strong arms on which we were accustomed to lean are now nerveless, and warm hearts whose every throb gave us cheer, no longer beat with life; friends whom we trusted have failed us; disappointment meets us where we had never until now looked with-

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out a sympathetic response; aids to our faith which were a strong support hitherto have given way as aids; new temptations beset us, old hopes are no longer to be seen; the very heavens above us are burning brass, and the ground beneath us is a dreary sand waste,—how can we bear up against and through all these opposings?

Hope against hope is now our duty. The anchor of hope is within the veil, and our eyes cannot see it, but our cable holds us to it with an unfailing grip. If there is nothing for us to do but to endure in hope, let us hope enduringly. If we find our very soul tempted to give up, let us rebuke its discouragement and encourage its enduring. Let our cry to the last be:

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

And why art thou disquieted within me?

Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him

Who is the health of my countenance, and my
God.”

“Hope thou in God!” In God is our hope, and while God lives there is no

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reason for despair. God's Son, our Saviour, assures us that, although in this world we must have tribulation, we are always to be of good cheer, for he has overcome the world, and he is with us in all the days of our trial and conflict. It is his fight as well as ours. Let us never give up while he is over us, with us, and within us. As C. H. Zellar sings triumphantly in tribulation :

“ My God with me in every place !
Firmly does the promise stand,
On land or sea, with present grace
Still to aid us near at hand.
If you ask, ‘ Who is with thee ? ’
God is here—my God with me !

“ No depth, nor prison, nor the grave,
Can exclude him from his own ;
His cheering presence still I have,
If in crowds or all alone :
In whatever state I be,
Everywhere is God with me !

“ In life, in death with him so near,
Every battle I shall win ;
Shall boldly press through dangers here,
Triumph over every sin !

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‘What ! shall you a victor be ?’

No, not I, but God in me ! ”

Not when things look bright, but when all is gone except God and self, is the time to endure and be brave, and to evidence true manhood. Never to give up, but ever to keep up and to keep at it, is the duty and the test of heroism in times that are hard and in hours that are dark.

When the battle is before and behind, when the enemy outnumbered us overwhelmingly, when his stronghold stands impregnable across our path, when defeat or death seems our only choice, then let us, in God’s strength, rise to the issue as it is, and let our inspiring call, like Norman Macleod’s, ring out in the gloom of night, for God’s sake, for our fellows’ sake, and for our own sake :

“ Brother ! sing a loud psalm,

Our hope’s not forlorn !

After darkness and twilight breaks forth
the new morn.

Let the mad foe get madder,

Never quail ! up the ladder !

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Grasp the sword
Of the Lord,
And forward !

“ Brother ! up to the breach,
For Christ's freedom and truth,
If we live, we shall teach,
With the strong faith of age and the bright
 hope of youth.
If we perish, then o'er us
Will ring the loud chorus,
Grasp the sword
Of the Lord,
And forward ! ”

XIV

Right Bearing of Sorrow

A promise of God to his children is that a day shall come when "death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more." But, until that day is here, there is sorrow over pain and death to the most favored of God's children; and the inspired injunction to them all is, not that they refrain from sorrow, but that they bear themselves in their sorrow as becomes God's children; that they "sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope."

How to bear sorrow in a Christian spirit, as distinct from the hopeless grief of the heathen, is a truth to be learned by all who are summoned to meet sorrow,—a truth that is liable to be forgotten by us in the hour when it is timeliest as a truth. Hopeless sorrow is Christless sorrow. He

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who realizes that his life is a God-led life, and that all his way is portioned out for him by unfailing and unerring love, cannot sorrow, even in the darkest hour, as those who have no hope.

He who is wholly the Lord's surely ought not to give way despondently to grief and mourning because of the Lord's dealings with him. Under the earlier dispensation, the high-priest, on whose miter was inscribed "Holiness to the Lord," was forbidden to "uncover his head" by removing that miter of consecration, or to rend his clothes in mourning, or in any such way to defile himself, as God's representative here on earth, even "for his father, or for his mother."

When David the king was told that the child for whom in its sickness he fasted and "lay all night upon the earth" was now dead, he "arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel; and he came into the house of the Lord, and worshiped. Then he came

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to his own house," and there, when bread was set before him, he ate, in order to gain new strength for new service.

This was not because of any lack of warmth of heart or of strength of feeling on the part of King David, but it was because of his living faith in God,—that faith which marked him as a man after God's own heart, and an example of believers in all the ages. "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept," he said; "for I said, Who knoweth whether the Lord will not be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Shall the faith of the Christian believer be less potent for comfort and support in the hour of personal bereavement than that of the ancient Hebrew, before the full truth concerning life and immortality had been brought to light in the gospel of Christ? Shall he who stands as a witness for Christ in the presence of those who need the com-

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forts of faith in him, dishonor his Master by a show of despairing grief in the hour of sorrow. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Even a cause of sorrow, as God's gift, is a good gift.

"God only smites that through the wounds of wo
The healing balm he gives may inlier flow."

To be overpowered by sorrow is to be selfish in sorrow. One can never be crushed by sorrow who is unselfish in a sense of sympathy with others, or in a sense of the duty of loving service for others. Selfish grief absorbs the soul in thought of self. Its despairing cry is:

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto
my sorrow, which is done unto me,
Wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day
of his fierce anger."

Unselfish grief thinks of others who also mourn because of this very cause of grief. "Jesus wept;" but he wept not for himself alone. His heart went out in sympathy

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toward the sorrowing sisters of his friend Lazarus; and as he wept, he spoke words of comfort to them, and he did a deed of loving ministry in their behalf. So of those who are like-minded with Christ. The pertinent questions of Mrs. Charles, with their helpful answers, ought to come home to us every one :

“ Is thy burden hard and heavy ? Do thy steps drag wearily ?

Help to bear thy brother's burden ; God will bear both it and thee.

“ Numb and weary on the mountains, wouldst thou sleep amidst the snow ?

Chafe that frozen form beside thee, and together both shall glow.

“ Art thou stricken in life's battle ?—many wounded round thee moan ;

Lavish on their wounds thy balsams, and that balm shall heal thine own.

“ Is the heart a living power ? Self-entwined, its strength sinks low ;

It can only live in loving, and, by serving, love will grow.”

During one of the battles of our Civil War, two loving brothers were side by side

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in an advancing line in the face of a murderous fire. One of them dropped dead, with a bullet through his brain. The other threw himself upon his brother's dead body with a cry of heart-bursting grief. Then, hearing the commander's inspiring call, "Forward," he sprang from his embrace of the dead, and hurried toward his place in the moving line, intent on doing his share of the work of the dead and of the living, and on being found at his post of duty to the last. A faithful and a courageous soldier that! His was the spirit of the true hero in every sphere.

Not less faithful, nor less courageous, is the bereaved wife who turns from all selfish brooding sorrow over her dead husband to sympathize with and to minister to her dear children, who are also grief-stricken, and who need her loving help and care! And thus it is in every sorrow,—the way to meet it, and the way to bear it, is to recognize it as a gift from a loving Father, and as a call to move forward anew in his

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service for his dear ones. This is the Easter lesson, as Mrs. Annie Trumbull Slosson tells it :

“ It was an Easter morn. Fair rose the sun,
And waked the world to beauty and to light ;
But, as I knelt beside my grave, within
My hungry, longing soul it still was night.

“ ‘Where is my Lord? Where is my Christ?’ I
moaned,
When suddenly there fell upon my ear
A faint, sweet sound, like distant angel tones,
Which every moment seemed to draw more
near.

“ The children, chanting loud their Easter hymn !
Outrang the clear, glad sound, ‘ He is not here !’
Once and again, and yet again it came,
‘ He is not here ! Our Christ, he is not here !’

“ ‘Not here ! Then I can never find my Lord :
Where have they laid him ? Master, help, I
pray !’
The answer came ; my grave seemed opened
wide,
As though an angel rolled the stone away.

“ And, looking in, I saw no light, no life :
It was a dark, a cold, a dreary prison.
Then rose again those childish voices sweet,
‘ He is not here, not here : he is arisen !’

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“ And lifting up my eyes I saw once more
The Sun, the Day-star fair, the world's pure
Light,
Blinding these tear-dimmed eyes, so used to see
Naught but the tomb's dark loneliness and
night.

“ ‘ Rabboni, Master ! ’ penitent, I cried,
‘ Forgive ! ’ And still the silvery voices sang,
‘ But go your way, and my disciples tell.’
And I—while yet upon the air it rang—

“ Obeyed my Master's order, and went back,
His poor to feed, to clothe ; to show the way
To wandering ones, his little lambs to lead.
And so I found my Lord that Easter day.”

XV

Comforting and Being Comforted

"Comfort," like "virtue," is a word that has lost much of its primitive force through the prevalence of a lower standard in the world's life, so that its original meaning is wellnigh lost sight of. Primarily, "virtue" is "manliness," "bravery," "knightly character;" but as a matter of usage "virtue" is merely such a measure of abstinence from evil doing as keeps one within the pale of decent society. "Comfort" originally meant "strength," or "support," but now it is generally understood as meaning "a state of tranquil enjoyment," or "that which produces the feeling of satisfaction."

In each case the word has been deprived of its pristine vigor, until it fails of conveying its best meaning as an expression of thought and truth. In both cases, it were well for those who have character,

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and who would evidence it, to reassert the true meaning of this symbol of courage, as a means of help to themselves and others.

Nothing is worthy of the name of comfort that is not strengthening, invigorating, inspiring. Life is a struggle, and he who lacks courage lacks comfort in life's contests. He who would give comfort must in some way give strength and courage; and he who would have comfort must avail himself of aids to courage and strength.

In the Communion Service of the Church of England, immediately after the Confession and Absolution, the officiating clergyman says to the communicants: "Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him." Then follow Scripture passages giving assurance of the redeeming power and forgiving love of Jesus. Courage and strength for the penitent sinner and the struggling saint are in these assurances; therefore they are called "comfortable words."

The promise of our Lord to his disciples

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was of the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" in all their tribulations and conflicts. The word here translated "Comforter" is more literally "Stander-by." Its suggestion is of one ever at hand, ready to give support and help. What thought could be more cheering and inspiriting than this to any battle-worn soldier of Christ, when every human helper fails! It is the thought of that old hymn of the fourteenth century :

"Fighting alone to-night,
With not even a stander-by
To cheer me on in the fight,
Or to hear me when I cry;
Only the Lord can hear,
Only the Lord can see
The struggle within, how dark and drear,
Though quiet the outside be!

"O Lord, thou hidest thy face,
And the battle clouds prevail!
Oh, grant me thy sweet grace,
That I may not utterly fail!
Fighting alone to-night,—
With what a beating heart;
Lord Jesus, in the fight,
Oh, stand not thou apart!"

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Every heart needs comforting in tribulation, when heavy burdened and sore taxed. But true comfort is found in added strength and courage for the duty of bearing up and pressing on, not in being diverted from the sense of need, or deceived as to its reality. Comfort is a stimulus and a tonic, not a narcotic or an anodyne. If one cannot relieve us from our sorrows, or incite us to fresh hope as to their ultimate outcome, let him not suppose that he can give us comfort by smooth words of pity or sympathy, or by conventional suggestions that ours is the inevitable lot of man.

And if we would give comfort to others, let us realize that it must be by pointing them to sources of strength and of cheer that shall incite to higher courage and prolonged endurance. "Lord, lighten my burden, or strengthen my back," was the prayer of a godly man of old, who realized the nature of true comfort, and longed for it. That prayer is one for ourselves in our trial, and its answer we should

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desire to bring to those whom we would comfort.

There are those whose very presence is a comfort to us in any time of sorrow, or doubt, or need. Strength and courage are in their expression of countenance,—what Mathew Royden calls,

“A sweet attractive kinde of grace,
A full assurance given by lookes,
Continuall comfort in a face,
The lineaments of Gospell bookes.”

And there are others, whose most kindly intended words of counsel or suggestion in the hour of our extremity are of a nature to depress rather than inspire us; so that we are tempted to cry out, with Job :

“I have heard many such things :
Miserable comforters are ye all.
Shall vain words have an end?”

All of us ought to have comfort—strength and courage—in the consciousness that the divine Stander-by is ever at our side, and is sure to sustain us to the end. And if we ourselves are comforted,

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we shall be a means of comfort to others. Our cheer and courage will be contagious; and we shall speak words of hope that may prove words of life to those who were at the point of despair.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For, as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ.” As Miss Hamilton counsels :

“ Ask God to give thee skill
In comfort’s art,
That thou may’st consecrated be
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy.
For heavy is the weight of ill
In every heart ;
And comforters are needed much
Of Christ-like touch.”

XVI

Giving Expression to Sympathy

How frequently it is said, "Words are of no service to the sorrowing!" Because of this saying, many a kindly heart refrains from expressing in words the sympathy with the sorrowing which wells up within it abundantly. But this saying is not a true saying. Words of sympathy with one in sorrow are a help, even where they cannot be a cure. They bring comfort and solace, while they are powerless to remove grief.

"A word in due season, how good is it!"

This is true of a word of sympathy as of a word of counsel.

Hearts that would break in their sorrow without any assurance of God's love in human sympathy, are stayed up in the conviction that they are not alone in their burden-bearing, as the words of tender in-

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terest in them in their trial multiply from those whose expressions carry proof of sincerity. Words *are* of service to the sorrowing, and they ought not to be withholden, in the hour of tribulation.

It is true, as the inspired proverb gatherer has recorded, that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy." It is true that only he who has a sorrow or a joy has fullest understanding of its measure. But it is in the light of this truth that another inspired writer says to every true-hearted follower of Christ: "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep."

Intermeddle not with another's joy, but let him know that you are glad he is joyous. Hope not to understand fully, or to remove, the bitterness of another's grief, but cause him to see that you sorrow for his sorrow, and that you would lessen or share it if you could. So it is that while "each man shall bear his own burden" in a peculiar sense, we can all "bear one

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another's burdens" by our sympathetic recognition of them, in fulfilment of the law of Christ.

God does not want his children to sorrow and suffer without the help of sympathy. When Elijah, the stalwart prophet of the old dispensation, was weary and disheartened under the pressure of his many trials and struggles, with no human friend to give him cheer, God sent an angel to speak words of hope to him, and to give him courage for a new beginning of his work for God and man. When a greater than Elijah was in an agony of bitterest trial in Gethsemane, without even one follower to watch with him for an hour, "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." To-day there is a better ministry to those who sorrow and suffer than any ministry of angels,—a ministry of human sympathy as illustrative of divine love. It is good to experience the gains of that ministry; it is good to bear a part in it.

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The expression of sympathy is quite as much a duty as the having of sympathy. It is very certain that we shall be of no service to one in sorrow by a sympathy which is not made known to him. And how sadly alone he would be 'if all of his friends, in the hour of his sorrow, had a sympathy with him which could find no form of expression. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop, but a good word maketh it glad." It is the spoken word which tells on another's heart.

"The kindly words that rise within the heart,
And thrill it with their sympathetic tone,
But die ere spoken, fail to play their part,
And claim a merit which is not their own."

An unexpressed sympathy may, it is true, be deep down in the heart; but it is better that the sympathy should fill the heart from the depths to the surface, and then overflow in kindly expression. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

In words out of the abundance of the

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heart, not in the abundance of words out of the heart, does sympathy show itself. The words that are fullest of feeling are few and well chosen. Sometimes a single word tells the whole story.

Often the best-intentioned proffer of sympathy fails of good because of the multiplicity of its words. This, indeed, it is that leads so many sensitive natures to shrink from the expression of the sympathy they feel when their friends are in sorrow. They remember their own annoyance from the clatter of busy tongues when their great grief longed for the privilege of its silence, and when they were tempted to cry out with Job against his talkative comforters, "Miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end?" And lest they should similarly fail of fitting utterances of sympathy, they stand mute while their hearts are swelling with grief that those whom they love are sorrowing.

The chief value in an expression of sympathy is in the fact that it *is* an expression

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of sympathy. There are wide differences in the manner of such expression, but the comforting truth that is common to them all is the truth that sympathy is their prompting, and that their utterers would gladly give help in the burden-bearing if they could. No one of us need ever hold back from an expression of sympathy with one in sorrow because of a fear that such expression may seem to be an intrusion. True sympathy can never be deemed intrusive; and those who sorrow sincerely will always be grateful for an assurance of sincere sympathy, from any human being who has interest enough in the sorrowing one to be moved to an expression of sympathy. There are no exceptions to this rule.

A father's heart was wrung with anguish over the fatal illness of his only son. As he answered a question concerning that illness in a city street-car, his words caught the ear of one of his neighbors, with whom he had only a speaking acquaintance, and against whom he had long had a prejudice

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because of certain personal minor peculiarities. That neighbor at once inquired particularly as to the condition of the sick child, he not having known before this of his illness. In the early gray of the next morning, after a night of watching over the dying boy, the father saw that neighbor at his front door, and found he had come to inquire with tender interest after the state of the little sufferer. That proof of sympathy with the father in his sorrow transfigured that neighbor in the father's eyes ; and now through the vista of years he is seen by that father in a loveliness all his own, as one who had sympathy in an hour of peculiar trial, and had no fear of intruding by giving it expression.

Again that father was in sorrow, even more grievously than when he was mourning an only son. Another neighbor, newly come into his part of the city, whose name was barely known to the mourner, sent in a simple card in assurance of his sorrowful sympathy, and its reception thrilled the

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sorrowing heart with its proof of a wish on that new comer's part to show his interest in the grief of a stricken household. It was not *what* was done or said, in either of these cases, but it was the evident desire to say or do something in proof of sympathy, that brought comfort and gratitude to the heart of the sorrowing one ; and the manifestation of such a desire will never be intrusive, or be thought so, in the hour of bitterest bereavement.

An army chaplain in our Civil War had just lost his dearest friend and tent-mate, killed in battle. His heart was bursting with sorrow, and his head was whirling in an agony of bewilderment over the magnitude of his personal bereavement, as he dragged his lonely way through the clinging mud of a Virginia road toward his division commander's headquarters, to make report and to seek assistance in recovering the body. A private soldier of his regiment was coming up the road, and, with an appreciative sense of his chaplain's

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loss and grief, he drew himself up into the position of a soldier, by the roadside, and bared his head reverently in the presence of a great sorrow. As the chaplain passed by, the soldier bowed his head in salute, and simply said in tones of thrilling, tender sympathy, "So, you have lost your *friend!*" There was nothing more; but the sorrowing heart was grateful; and still, after more than thirty long years, those words and tones of sympathy thrill in that chaplain's heart of hearts, and he is unspeakably grateful for their speaking and their memory.

There are, again, words of sympathy spoken to those in sorrow which are precious for their own sake. The spirit of sympathy prompts to the soul's best utterances, and many a timely letter written to one in bereavement is treasured for years, because of the help it has already given, and the cheer that its truths may impart to yet others also. But, aside from this, there is a value in even the simplest expression

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of sympathy with the sorrowing ; and no multiplication of such expressions by others to one who is bereaved can diminish the worth to him of another expression of this nature from another sympathizer in the hour of his trial. A fresh expression of sympathy in sorrow is an added help to one whose need is unceasing ; and he who has the power of uttering it has the power of proving a blessing to one to whom God would have help given.

Only he who has sorrowed most deeply can know the real worth of words of sympathy in sorrow ; but the testimony of such souls ought to incite us all to the free expression of our sympathy with the sorrowing, without any fear of intrusion thereby. Words of Christian sympathy are words of Christian cheer. " Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

XVII

After the Wreck

There are stories of shipwreck which stand out in history, and which are repeated from generation to generation. Many who read these stories are inclined to think that a shipwreck is a terrible yet a rare event among experiences on the sea. But, on the other hand, never a day passes without such a disaster among those who go down to the sea in ships; and never a morning dawns but that some who are watching on the coast see the signs of a wreck that is occurring just now, or that recently has occurred, on the waters that wash that shore.

Government statistics show that along the shores, inland and ocean, of the United States alone, from three to five vessels are wrecked, on an average, every day in the year, including in their perils from twenty-

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five to thirty thousand persons in a twelve-month. In view of these facts, a shipwreck is a possibility ever present to the minds of those who live near the sea, or who have loved ones on the sea. They understand what is meant by a shipwreck, and their daily thoughts and prayers include those who are constantly liable to this disaster.

Only one who has been in a vessel on the sea in a storm can fully realize what a vessel is to those whom it bears up above the waters and before the winds. From the days when the ark, which held Noah and those who were with him, was the only protection and hope to the children of men,—while the storm-swept waters “prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered,”—down to the present day, a vessel on the waters is all the world, for the time being, to those who have committed themselves to its possibilities and its vicissitudes. The thought of a wreck to those in a vessel on the

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waters, is the thought of the destruction of that which is everything to them; and it seems as if with the going down or the stranding of that vessel there was a going down of all hope.

Yet while there are cases in which the sudden sinking of a vessel at sea carries with it to destruction all who have trusted themselves to its protection, it is oftener the case that a wreck is not the end of life or of hope to those whom it has borne up until now. Government statistics show that only about one in thirty of those who were on vessels wrecked in the waters of the United States in a single year lost their lives in the disaster. Twenty-nine out of every thirty survived the wreck, and had to face the question what they were to do when they could no longer trust to the vessel to which they had trusted all.

When the vessel which was bearing Paul the apostle toward Rome was wrecked on the shores of Malta, Paul, who, although a prisoner under guard, was recognized as

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the moral superior of them all, "commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves overboard, and get first to the land : and the rest, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. And so it came to pass that they all escaped safe to the land." Not one of those who were on that ill-fated vessel went down with it to destruction ; but every one of them had life and hope and opportunity after the wreck. And as it was with Paul and his fellow-voyagers, so is it with every survivor of every wreck at sea, along shore, or—on the land. The hope and the duty after the wreck are as real and positive as the duty and the hope before the wreck, to every one who has trusted to a perishable vessel, and been disappointed but not destroyed.

Not all shipwrecks are on the sea. Not all the vessels to which men commit their earthly all sail on the ocean, and breast its winds and its waves. There are deep waters and stormy winds on land ; and

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there are vessels of home, and of riches, and of employment, and of reputation, and of affection, which are for a time the all in all of those who are making the voyage of life in them. And many of these vessels also are wrecked; and those who trusted to them have, after the wreck, to face the question of what is still left of opportunity, of possibility, and of hope.

A husband and father to whom his family seems everything and all, is traversing time's ocean in a sense of entire security, when a sudden storm of disease, or a cyclone of accident, wrecks the vessel in which he is voyaging, and wife and child are taken from his side. What is possible to that man after this wreck? Or, when a business enterprise, in which a capitalist has ventured all his earthly means, is wrecked in a financial whirlwind, what remains to him worth living for, after this? Or, when a laboring man's employment is gone through the wreck of the establishment for which he was working,

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at a time when other wrecks of the same sort are strewing the shores of his sea with fragments, is there anything that still remains to be struggled for ?

Or, when a young man finds his good name and reputation, which seemed his all in all, wrecked through his folly, or his wrong-doing, or his misfortune, is there a possibility of continued hope to him ? Or, when a prized and sacred friendship, which seemed imperishable to him who trusted himself to its influences and inspirations, is wrecked by misunderstandings or opposings, is everything gone with this ? These are the questions being asked on every side by shipwrecked voyagers over life's sea, as the vessels to which they trusted go down in the great deep.

There is never a total wreck, when any one survives to ask what is worth living for after the wreck. There are "broken pieces of the ship," when the family has struck the rocks of disaster; and out of these broken pieces a new shelter can be

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constructed to cover the survivors, and to center their precious memories as incentives to renewed endeavors for the common good. If fortune or employment be wrecked, the man himself remains.

Even though there be a wreck of reputation, there is a possibility of renewed life and hope.

“ In the wreck of noble lives,
Something immortal still survives.”

And no wreck of friendship can destroy its high ideals, or take from him who was true in it the gain to his own soul of unselfishly striving to be a friend. The memories of that friendship will continually declare to him who has lost most by it, and yet who retains his own purpose of friendship:

“ The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years ;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.”

Many a man's best work in life is accomplished after the wreck of the vessel to

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which he had entrusted all his earthly interests. He who realizes that he voyages under the protection of the Saviour who kept Paul and his fellow-travelers while their ship went to pieces, will never despair in the thought of his vessel's wreck; for he knows that if the earthly vessel in which he journeys be destroyed, he is still upborne in a spiritual vessel, given of God, not made with hands, eternal as the heavens.

XVIII

Afterward, Peace

“All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness.” Chastisement, like every form of tribulation, is for a purpose. Until that purpose is accomplished, the chastisement continues as chastisement; when that purpose is accomplished, chastisement as chastisement ceases, and, instead of it, its permanent results appear.

So long as the gold is mixed with dross, the heat of the furnace fire is needed for the separation of the one from the other; but when he who sits, as the refiner, by the testing and purifying furnace, sees the clear reflection of his own image in the molten metal, the work of the assaying furnace is accomplished, and the fire's heat

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is no longer a necessity. While the husk still covers the grain, or the chaff is still mingled with the wheat, the prongs and the pressure of the threshing-sledge, the blows of the whirling flail, or the blast of the winnowing fan, must be continued as a means of separating the precious from the worthless; but when the husbandman finally sees that the result of his harvest is ready for the garner, through the processes of tribulation, he no longer feels the need of using the sledge, the flail, or the fan, to cleanse the wheat he has toiled for and longed after in its purity. Thenceforward the grain is freed from the trials to which it must have been subjected before.

Chastening is training. Training is a process of upbringing. A child must be brought up, trained, chastened, by a parent, in order to attain to true manhood. As a child, one speaks as a child, feels as a child, thinks as a child; but as he is helped to become a real man, he is glad to put away childish things, while he still continues to

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be childlike. God's chastening is man's share of tribulation in this life: it is the means of separating the good from the evil in his character. Without such tribulation a child of God could never become a man of God; nor could he even be sure that he is a child of God unless he is a partaker of his Father's loving chastisements as a help toward high manhood.

It is this thought that the writer to the Hebrews emphasizes when he says: "Ye have forgotten the exhortation, which reasoneth with you as with sons,

My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,

Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him ;
For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

It is for chastening that ye endure [that is, ye endure because it is a training process]; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then

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are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness."

The Greek word here translated "exercised" is a word that applies to gymnastics as the training of an athlete. A man who is in training for a contest for victory has to endure hardness, and be subjected to unpleasant pressure and varied self-denials; but he submits willingly, in order that he may reap the results of this training. He who accepts the tribulation of chastening as the training of an athlete, and is "exercised thereby," comes into a higher

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manhood through his chastening, and "afterward" he has the gain of all this. Not *now*, but "*afterward*." As Miss Havergal reminds us :

"Now the pruning, sharp, unsparing ;
Scattered blossom, bleeding shoot !
Afterward, the plenteous bearing
Of the Master's pleasant fruit."

"What shall thine 'afterward' be, O Lord ?
How long must thy child endure ?
Thou knowest ! 'Tis well that I know it not !
Thine 'afterward' cometh, I cannot tell what,
But I know that thy word is sure."

"Peaceable fruit," "even the fruit of righteousness," is to be in the "afterward" of improved chastening, of rightly endured tribulation. The fruit of peace is a fruit of rightness, a fruit of coming, through improved chastening, into right relations with the Father of spirits, who chastens us for our upbringing into holiness. "Peace," as Patterson Du Bois reminds us, "is in its root meaning that which binds or fastens ; that which makes two things one. Popularly, the antithesis of peace is war. Peace

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is conjunctive ; war is disjunctive. Peace builds up ; war destroys. Peace unites ; war separates. Every time we do an evil deed, or think an evil thought, we make warfare against God. In this warfare something must be injured or destroyed ; and, as God cannot be harmed by one of his creatures, the creature himself is harmed, is in process of destruction. Only peace can restore the ruptured bond ; and the restoration to union and concord is itself peace."

If we would be at peace with God, we must endure the necessary preliminary chastenings, tribulations, refinings. There is no peace possible to us while causes of difference with God remain in our hearts. Jesus Christ came from the Father to bring God's erring children back into union with God ; but he said that a sword would inevitably precede peace. The divine order is, "first pure, then peaceable." Only as the dross and the chaff are purged from the better material of our divinely given

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nature can we have that purity that precedes peace. The plow and harrow must come before the harvest, the flail and the fan before the garner. As Horatius Bonar sings :

“ 'Tis first the good and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the good ;
First the rough seed, sown in the rougher soil,
Then the flower blossom, or the branching
wood.

“ 'Tis first the night,—stern night of storm and war,
Long nights of heavy clouds and veiled skies,—
Then the far sparkle of the morning star,
That bids the saints awake and dawn arise.”

It is the peace that comes only after conflict and struggle that gives joy and rest to the soul. In the words of Helen Gray Cone :

“ There is no calm like that when storm is done ;
There is no pleasure keen as pain's release ;
There is no joy that lies so deep as peace,
No peace so deep as that by struggle won.”

In the Old Testament and in the New are divinely given assurances of peace ; but the wilderness of training has to be passed before the land of promised rest in God,

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which is peace, can be the pilgrim's home. The commanded blessing of the high-priest upon the children of Israel was :

“ The Lord bless thee, and keep thee :

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and
be gracious unto thee :

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and
give thee peace.”

Jesus said to his disciples : “ Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.” The apostolic benediction was : “ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Every one of God's children and of Christ's followers can have restful peace in Christ, even in this life, if he will but endure unto the end, and rightly improve, his Father's appointed tribulations for his necessary purifying. “ Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.”

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